



Teaching the *Colourstrings* Violinist:  
Student Development Through and Beyond  
*Colourstrings*

by

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## Declaration

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Throughout this whole journey, my endless love and thanks go to my wife, Kirsten.

## Abstract

Since the 1970s, Géza Szilvay (born 1943), along with his colleagues at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, have taught several generations of professional violinists using the *Colourstrings* approach. *Colourstrings*, however, is generally accepted as an approach for teaching beginners, usually very young children who begin their instrumental studies from approximately age four to seven years old. The aim of this study was to find out how Szilvay and his colleagues develop students through and beyond *Colourstrings* towards a higher, professional level.

Prior to this research, I observed the violin teachers and students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute and am currently undertaking the teacher certification program. My experiences at the teacher training courses and at the Institute were the chief inspiration of this research, which ultimately comprises a review of *Colourstrings* training and interviews with Szilvay, teachers at the Institute and a certified *Colourstrings* teacher in Australia.

The research findings showed that violin teachers using *Colourstrings* should consider three areas in their teaching: philosophy, methodology and material. The interviewed teachers were questioned with regards to these three areas and a general pattern was found. The underlying philosophies of *Colourstrings* are inspired by the Hungarian pedagogue Zoltán Kodály and remain consistent for the teaching of any student no matter what age or level. The methodologies employed by the teachers showed many

similarities; however, there were differences found in comparison with the Australian teacher, given environmental contexts.

The interviews with the East-Helsinki teachers also provided information on a grade system that has been put into practice at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, which complements the *Colourstrings* methodology. The participants gave insight into this grade system and how it is employed at the Institute; as a result, a general framework of violin study after *Colourstrings* was formulated.

## **Dedication**

To

My Students

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction, Review and Research Methods

### 1.1 Introduction

Since the 1970s, Géza Szilvay (born 1943), along with his colleagues at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, have taught several generations of professional violinists using the *Colourstrings* approach. *Colourstrings*, however, is accepted as an approach for teaching beginners, usually very young children who begin their instrumental studies from approximately age four to seven years old.<sup>1</sup> It would appear though, that by means of *Colourstrings*, almost any child could potentially learn to play the violin to a professional level.

Until it is understood how to use *Colourstrings* effectively, teachers outside of the East-Helsinki Music Institute will remain vulnerable to misunderstanding its potential to teach beyond the beginner level. To illustrate this observation, a comment was made to me in conversation with an Australian violin teacher regarding *Colourstrings*: “It only works for Szilvay.”<sup>2</sup> The aim of this study was to find out how Szilvay and his colleagues develop students through and beyond *Colourstrings* towards a higher, professional level.

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda Sue Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study of Géza Szilvay’s Colourstrings Method for Violin,” (Ph.D diss., Arizona State University, 1994), 40.

<sup>2</sup> March 28, 2014.

## 1.2 Background to Research

Géza Szilvay introduced me to *Colourstrings* in 2010 and I became fascinated with it because it was so different to my own upbringing, which was primarily through *The Suzuki Method* in my childhood years and later with orchestral violinists and university professors. I began using the *Colourstrings* materials with my own students and started to see not only gaps in my teaching but also in my own learning of the violin.

Among many aspects of *Colourstrings*, I found that using the relative solmisation system was an effective tool for the children's intonation and being able to play freely around the violin fingerboard. I noticed immediately that instead of using visual aids on the fingerboard and playing in first position for the first few years as I did, in *Colourstrings* students are provided with two or three visual aids for the whole fingerboard in the first few months of learning and then progress to no visual aids.

In 2011 was invited to attend a teacher-training course and to observe the program at the East-Helsinki Music Institute where *Colourstrings* originated and subsequently developed. My observations and experiences at the East-Helsinki Music Institute were recorded from August to December in 2011, and included private lessons, group classes, small ensemble tutorials, orchestral rehearsals, concerts, aural classes and assistant teaching at the institute. Between 2011-2015 I attended 4 more teacher-

training courses and commenced the process towards achieving the *Colourstrings* teaching certification.<sup>3</sup>

At the time this study commenced I had completed the first two phases of the three-phase *Colourstrings* Teacher Certification. Documentation, notes, and recordings that were taken from the courses I had participated in were reflected on as part of this research. These experiences were chiefly the inspiration for this research project, for on several occasions at the teacher-training courses other participants asked, what I found to be a compelling query: “What happens after *Colourstrings*?”<sup>4</sup>

### 1.3 A Brief History of Colourstrings

Géza Szilvay originally created the first pages of the *Colourstrings* violin system for his daughter in the 1970s, which consisted of colourful game-like material for teaching her the violin.<sup>5</sup> The original materials were devised for family use, however more were created through Szilvay’s experiences of teaching several generations of pupils at the East-Helsinki Music Institute in Finland from 1971 through to 2010. The materials were “enriched and deepened by the experiences, observations, advice and requests of several generations of pupils.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> These courses included the *International Colourstrings Course: Phase IIa and IIb* in Klagenfurt Austria, the *22nd International Colourstrings Course, Phase I* in St Paul im Lavanttal Austria, and the *2014 Australian Colourstrings Festival* at Fairholme College, Toowoomba.

<sup>4</sup> In a Question and Answer Session with Géza Szilvay and teacher trainees, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 6, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2010), 141.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The philosophies underpinning *Colourstrings* are based on the pedagogical ideas of Zoltán Kodály, (1882 – 1967).<sup>7</sup> The materials and methodological progression of *Colourstrings* training reflects what is loosely referred to as ‘The Kodály Method.’<sup>8</sup>

My desire was to create a child-centred violin tutor book, which nevertheless met the expectations set by Zoltán Kodály: constant equilibrium between the development of musical hearing, instrumental technique, music theory and emotion. Singing, hearing, playing, understanding and reading are inseparable. This was a real challenge for me as the architect of the violin school.<sup>9</sup>

Szilvay’s brother Csaba Szilvay (born 1941) created an adaptation of *Colourstrings* for the cello. Subsequent adaptations of *Colourstrings* have been published for viola, double bass, guitar, piano and flute. There are also publications targeted at home use and pre-instrumental training, including songs for vocal and aural training as well as musical literacy.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the tutor books, the Szilvay brothers together with the Hungarian composer László Rossa (born 1941) wrote string chamber music and sonatas for violin or cello with piano. The word ‘Colourstrings’ can therefore be used as an umbrella term for child-centred educational materials for music, not just for instrumental study but also for singing, aural training, music theory and chamber music. According to Mitchell, the word ‘Colourstrings’ was not Szilvay’s idea but suggested by the original publisher, Fazer Music Inc.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Brenda Sue Mitchell, "String Teaching Plus Kodály Equals "Colourstrings," *American String Teacher* 48, no. 1 (Winter, 1998): 73-7, accessed May 20, 2014, <http://ezproxy.utas.edu.au/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/964763?accountid=14245>.

<sup>8</sup> According to the Kodály Institute of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Zoltán Kodály’s ideas on music education are usually mentioned under the inaccurate name Kodály Method.

<sup>9</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook*, 141.

<sup>10</sup> For entire list of *Colourstrings* publications as of September 2016, see: <http://www.colourstrings.com.au/Colourstrings%20book%20price%20list%20September%202016.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 46-47.

In 1972, Géza and Csaba Szilvay founded *The Helsinki Junior Strings*, (currently recognised as *The Helsinki Strings*), a string orchestra based at the East-Helsinki Music Institute. The ensemble is world-renowned as it has toured over twenty countries and released more than thirty recordings for *Finlandia Records* and *Warner Classics*.<sup>12</sup> Over seventy television programmes featured Szilvay with the orchestra at the East-Helsinki Music Institute under the title *Minifiddlers in Musicland*, which is said to have “marked a new era in music education in Finland.”<sup>13</sup> The renowned violinists Yehudi Menuhin and Max Rostal have served as patrons of the orchestra, and it is still based at the Institute.

*Colourstrings* and the string programme at the East-Helsinki Music Institute is acclaimed by international music organisations including the Australian String Teachers’ Association (AUSTA), the European String Teachers’ Association (ESTA), American String Teachers’ Association (ASTA), International Society for Music Education (ISME), Nordic Music Pedagogical Union (NMPU), and the International Kodály Society.<sup>14</sup> Schools and music academies in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the USA, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Singapore and Hong Kong are now using *Colourstrings*.<sup>15</sup> The Szilvay Brothers have received international honours in recognition of their achievements as string pedagogues and conductors including the Knight Order of the Finnish Lion, the Culture Prize of

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<sup>12</sup> Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival, Ensembles 2013: *The Helsinki Strings*, VIA MUSICA - Vienna International Association for Music and Culture Exchange, accessed 19 December 2016: <http://www.sclfestival.org/the-helsinki-strings>.

<sup>13</sup> “The Helsinki String’s Biography,” *Last.fm*, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.last.fm/music/The+Helsinki+Strings>.

<sup>14</sup> Géza Szilvay, “Colourstrings,” in *Zoltán Kodály – Composer, Musicologist and Educationist: A Festschrift for Professor Matti Vainio July 5, 1996*, ed. Anu Sormunen (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä Department of Musicology, 1996), 58-59.

<sup>15</sup> “Colourstrings,” *Tigers and Teapots*, accessed May 11, 2014, <http://tigersandteapots.com.au/music-for-children/colourstrings.html>.



Finland, Hungarian State Award for Cultural Activity, and the Pro Musica Award.<sup>16</sup>

Géza Szilvay was decorated with the Accent Prize of the Association of Finnish Music Institutes, the International Kodály Prize, and a Professorship from the President of Finland.<sup>17</sup>

Every year since 1977, the Szilvay brothers have presented *Colourstrings* teaching workshops in various countries including Sweden, Finland, Canada, Australia, Denmark, Poland, Scotland, Japan, England, Belgium, Switzerland, Faroe Islands, Austria, Netherlands, Russia, Hungary, Germany, Korea, China, Estonia, United States of America, Norway, Romania (Transylvania), Latvia, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Nepal and Greece.<sup>18</sup>

In 2010, Géza Szilvay retired from the East-Helsinki Music Institute; however, he continued to tour internationally delivering teacher-training courses. In 2012, Szilvay launched the *International Minifiddlers*, a distance-learning project broadcast online. It involved Géza Szilvay teaching a class of beginner violin students in Helsinki with *Colourstrings* and was broadcast online using teleconferencing technology to classes of violin students around the world.<sup>19</sup> *International Minifiddlers* has received awards

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Mittermayer, “Géza Szilvay”, *Colourstrings*, May 12, 2014, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://www.colourstrings.fi/aboutgeza.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Dates and Cities for past Congresses, Symposia and Courses are listed on the Colourstrings Website: [www.colourstrings.fi](http://www.colourstrings.fi).

<sup>19</sup> Inkeri Ruokonen, Pirkko Juntunen and Heikki Ruismäki. “Experiences of participants in Minifiddlers’ distance learning environment,” *Problems in Music Pedagogy*, vol. 12, no 2: (December, 2013): 93, accessed October 13, 2014, <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/97111734/experiences-participants-minifiddlers-distance-learning-environment>.

from the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the Pro Musica Foundation and Géza Szilvay was awarded with a Knighthood by the President of Hungary János Áder in 2013.<sup>20</sup>

#### 1.4 Review of Related Research

Research regarding student development through and beyond *Colourstrings* is limited and outdated. Mitchell<sup>21</sup> and Loughnan<sup>22</sup> examined the *Colourstrings* violin books and conducted personal interviews with Géza Szilvay to include in their theses. Mitchell and Loughnan conducted their research between twenty to thirty years ago however and there has been a huge expansion of *Colourstrings* materials for the violin. For example, during the time of their research, the *Colourstrings Violin ABC* series consisted of two books:<sup>23</sup> there are now six.<sup>24</sup> In the discussion of student development through and beyond *Colourstrings*, Mitchell and Loughnan limited their research predominantly to violin etude material. Pieces and extracts from this material can now be found in the newer *Colourstrings* books, in particularly *Violin ABC Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages*.<sup>25</sup> These publications however include a wide variety of material such as sonata repertoire and performance repertoire, not just etudes. Voima and Viksten briefly reviewed the more recent editions of *Violin ABC Book A-D*, however at the time of their research, *Book E-F*, and *Yellow Pages* were forthcoming publications of *Colourstrings*.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “About International Minifiddlers”, *International Miniddlers*, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://sarestoakatemia.org/minifiddlers/about>.

<sup>21</sup> Brenda Sue Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study of Géza Szilvay’s *Colourstrings* Method for Violin” (Ph.D diss., Arizona State University 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Celia Loughnan, “Starting With Szilvay” (bachelor’s thesis, University of Tasmania Conservatorium of Music, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Colourstrings Violin ABC*, Book A-B, (Helsinki: Edition Fazer, 1977)

<sup>24</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Colourstrings Violin ABC*, Book A-F, (Helsinki: Fennica Gerhman, 2010)

<sup>25</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Colourstrings Yellow Pages*, 3 vols, (Helsinki: Fennica Gerhman, 2010)

<sup>26</sup> Noora Voima, “Child Friendly Approach to Instrumental Education” (bachelor’s thesis, Lahti University of Applied Sciences, 2009), 26, accessed July 19, 2014, <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-201002041909>.

It is possible to link *Colourstrings* to other violin methods so that continuous development is not interrupted due to limited resources. Loughnan<sup>27</sup> and Pohjola<sup>28</sup> agreed that *Colourstrings* could be used prior to, and in conjunction with the *Suzuki Violin School*, as this method is widely used around the world and also intended for young beginners. One of the chief differences with the *Colourstrings* material compared with *Suzuki* is that individual concepts of violin playing are united with reading and theory in a step-by-step process in *Colourstrings*, bringing the violin to an intellectual activity.<sup>29</sup> For that reason, it may be profitable to use *Colourstrings* prior to *Suzuki* repertoire given the added benefit of early reading development. Loughnan's list of study repertoire illustrates that the repertoire from *Suzuki Volumes I - VI* can be used following the first publications of *Colourstrings* in 1977.<sup>30</sup> There are many differences in the application of the two systems that were investigated by Pohjola, in particular how technique is taught and the early use of chamber music in *Colourstrings*.<sup>31</sup>

One key link between Szilvay's teaching and Suzuki's approach is that both agree on creating an active musical environment for young children as an important means for quality learning.<sup>32</sup> Their teaching has not only seen the rise of many professional violinists, but also, the employment of school string programmes. String programmes adopting *Suzuki* have been applied worldwide with subsequent research projects

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<sup>27</sup> Celia Loughnan, "Starting With Szilvay" (bachelor's thesis, University of Tasmania Conservatorium of Music, 1988), 40.

<sup>28</sup> Anna Pohjola, "Adding Colour to Suzuki Learning" (bachelor's thesis, Metropolia University of Applied Studies, Ruoholahti Library, Helsinki, 2009), 40, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/6495>.

<sup>29</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 36.

<sup>30</sup> Loughnan, 40.

<sup>31</sup> This research will not investigate these differences, however they may provide useful insight for teachers who have a *Suzuki* background.

<sup>32</sup> Pohjola, 6.

having been implemented. The same cannot be said with regard to *Colourstrings*; however, its increasing popularity suggests that future projects will transpire.

Observing Szilvay's teaching and the string programme at the East-Helsinki Music Institute has been a source of inspiration for several teachers and researchers. Mitchell used observations as a research tool for examining the application of *Colourstrings* curriculum at the Institute, in particular of Géza Szilvay teaching and conducting.<sup>33</sup> Bunting,<sup>34</sup> Pretto<sup>35</sup> and Homfray<sup>36</sup> have documented brief observations of the string programme at the East-Helsinki Music Institute during their visits, while Murphy used the programme as a reference model for informing new programs in Australia, notably indicating that the Institute allows for the development of future professional musicians.<sup>37</sup> All of these researchers commented on the high quality of every violin student at the Institute and the impressive ensemble playing of the string orchestra, one of which was featured in *The Strad*:

The results are extraordinary. I heard an ensemble of 10 to 13-year-olds rehearsing Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* and bringing to it a richness and depth of tone that would put many a more supposedly advanced group to shame.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 43-45.

<sup>34</sup> Philippa Bunting, "String Pedagogy and musicianship teaching in Hungary, Eastern Europe and Finland: A Comparative Study Trip" (2006), 14, accessed 8 July 2014, [http://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrated-reports/73\\_1.pdf](http://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/migrated-reports/73_1.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Alessandra Pretto, "The Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship – To Observe the Colourstrings Program in Helsinki, Finland," (2002), accessed 20 August 2014, [https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/media/fellows/Pretto\\_Alessandra\\_2002-1.pdf](https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/media/fellows/Pretto_Alessandra_2002-1.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Tim Homfray, "Altered Images", *The Strad*, September 2006, 78-82, accessed October 30, 2015, <http://www.colourstrings.at/downloads/Strad%20Artikel.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Fintan Murphy, Nikki Rickard, Anneliese Gill, Helen Grimmett, "Informing new string programmes: Lessons learned from an Australian experience," *British Journal of Music Education*, 28:3 (2011): 288, accessed October 1, 2015, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nikki\\_Rickard/publication/231771263\\_Informing\\_new\\_string\\_programmes\\_Lessons\\_learned\\_from\\_an\\_Australian\\_experience/links/0f317535da18dbf8ba000000.pdf?origin=publication\\_list](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nikki_Rickard/publication/231771263_Informing_new_string_programmes_Lessons_learned_from_an_Australian_experience/links/0f317535da18dbf8ba000000.pdf?origin=publication_list).

<sup>38</sup> Homfray, 78.

The observations recorded by researchers who visited the Institute are predominantly of Géza Szilvay teaching and conducting. Furthermore, there seems to be almost no contact or observations recorded of certified *Colourstrings* violin teachers, (other than Géza Szilvay) at either the East-Helsinki Music Institute or outside of the Institute. For this reason, it can be hypothesised that the notable quality of the violinists observed at the East-Helsinki Music Institute may not be due to *Colourstrings* itself but rather more to Szilvay's ability to teach. Szilvay argued this claim by stating that his students who have pursued successful careers as professional violinists can credit *Colourstrings* rather than their own prodigious talents or Szilvay's teaching; furthermore, teachers other than Szilvay have recognised that due to *Colourstrings*, their students have gained a more rounded education of the violin and as a result have reached the possibility of pursuing professional careers.<sup>39</sup> Regardless of these statements, research into the application of *Colourstrings* outside the Institute is limited. Mitchell supported this by finding that there is a need for study into *Colourstrings* programs other than the East-Helsinki Music Institute in order to investigate the differences.<sup>40</sup> Loughnan<sup>41</sup> and Mitchell<sup>42</sup> agreed that differences of application are inevitable due to cultural contexts, while Murphy suggested that suitably qualified teachers with comprehensive training in the particular philosophies and methodologies are required for similar programs to succeed.<sup>43</sup>

In Australia, there are five violin teachers who have been awarded an “*Honorary Colourstrings Teacher Training Certificate* by the *Colourstrings International*

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<sup>39</sup> Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study,” 39.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>41</sup> Loughnan, 29.

<sup>42</sup> Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study,” 75.

<sup>43</sup> Murphy et al., 298.

*Association*.”<sup>44</sup> Three of the five teachers have published research about Szilvay and *Colourstrings*, having worked with Szilvay over the past thirty years.<sup>45</sup> Banney was useful to this research as he examined the roles of physical contact in Géza Szilvay’s teaching, noting that it “allows the student to experience and develop optimal violin technique from the start.”<sup>46</sup> The significance of physical contact established by Banney suggests that it something that should be analysed by observers of violin teachers, yet no research to date provides detailed analysis of the physical assistance offered by either Szilvay or violin teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute. The observations used in this research can confirm that physical assistance was frequently employed by all of these teachers with students of all ages, and furthermore, training and guidance in teaching through touch is a core part of the *Colourstrings* teacher training courses. Given that playing the violin is in itself is largely a kinaesthetic activity, learning ways to teach employing appropriate and judiciously applied touch is crucial.<sup>47</sup>

The certified *Colourstrings* teachers in Australia have collaborated several times to host teacher training and introductory courses in Australian cities delivered by the Szilvay brothers. Having been a participant on several of these courses in Australia and abroad, information and observations from the courses are referred to in this research. There is little information in currently available research documents or reviews regarding these courses from the perspective of participants. That said however; Viksten, a current violin teacher at the East-Helsinki Music Institute gave

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<sup>44</sup> “Find a Colourstrings Teacher,” Colourstrings Australia, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.colourstrings.com.au/find%20a%20teacher.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> David Banney, “Physical Contact in Violin Teaching,” accessed January 30, 2016, <http://www.colourstrings.at/downloads/Physical+Contact+in+Violin+Teaching.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Susan Kempter, *How Muscles Learn: Teaching the Violin with the Body in Mind*, (U.S.A: Summy-Birchard Music, 2003), 8.

insight regarding teacher training from the perspective of a *Colourstrings* teacher mentor, demonstrating that violin teachers who use *Colourstrings* without having experienced the teacher training courses are vulnerable to misunderstanding.<sup>48</sup> In particular for teacher trainees of *Colourstrings*, Viksten noticed that their understanding of the curriculum and familiarity with the materials are essential factors for employing *Colourstrings* effectively:

Oppimateriaali ei siis saa olla synonyymi sanalle opetussuunnitelma!

...

opettajat tuntevat materiaalin ja peruslogiikan niin huonosti, että asioita opetetaan sikin sokin sieltä täältä poimien, saattaen oppilaat täydelliseen epäloogisuuden tilaan.

...

mutta kertovat siitä, että loistavakaan oppimateriaali ei tee kumpaakaan, oppilasta eikä opettajaa, onnelliseksi.<sup>49</sup>

*Study materials should not be synonymous with curriculum!*

...

*The teachers' familiarity with the material and its basic logic is so poor that things are taught in an illogical order, bringing the students to an illogical completion.*

...

*Great study literature does not necessarily mean great students or teachers.*<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Heidi Viksten, *A Violin Teacher's Journey from Teaching to Coaching Colleagues on the Colour Strings Method* (bachelor's thesis, Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulu, 2009), 12, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://publications.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/6218/OPETTAJASTA%20OHJAAJAKSI%20Colourstrings-metodin%20aarella.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>49</sup> Viksten, 15.

Murphy's assessment of *Colourstrings* supports Viksten's theory with regards to teacher training, though in addition he added that effective teacher training needs to be implemented both prior to and during teachers' application of *Colourstrings*, especially given its distinctive approaches to technique, methodology and philosophy.<sup>51</sup>

One of the original intentions of this research was to collect materials for violin study following *Colourstrings*, however in light of Viksten's research, it was decided that a single listing of repertoire would not offer enough scope for teachers. The *Colourstrings* curriculum involves musicianship activity coupled with instrumental training; therefore, a continuation of its methodology suggests a more holistic approach is required, rather than just listing violin repertoire.

The recurring theme in all research projects about the holistic approach of *Colourstrings* is that it is based on the philosophies of Zoltán Kodály. Kodály was a Hungarian educator, composer and musicologist who considered music education from infancy to adulthood a necessity of life.<sup>52</sup> The *Kodály Institute* indicated that Kodály should be approached by his ideas and not necessarily as a method: "He formulated principles rather than teaching techniques or a step-by-step process or advice for teachers."<sup>53</sup> Given that Szilvay's musical upbringing in mid-twentieth century Hungary was essentially Kodály-based, elements of that training have inevitably influenced his work:

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<sup>50</sup> Translation interpreted by the author using "Google Translate": <https://translate.google.com.au>.

<sup>51</sup> Murphy et al., 296.

<sup>52</sup> "Kodály Concept," Kodály Institute of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, accessed 10 May 2016, [www.kodaly.hu/zoltan\\_kodaly/kodaly\\_concept](http://www.kodaly.hu/zoltan_kodaly/kodaly_concept).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



I was educated in Hungary. And any Hungarian who was educated in the 50s and 60s of course was taught by the so-called Kodály method. I would say that it is in my blood.<sup>54</sup>

For teachers to understand *Colourstrings* more deeply means by definition that they need to understand Kodály. Mitchell confirmed that an awareness of Kodály's approach is necessary before using *Colourstrings*.<sup>55</sup> Explaining what Kodály is and how it works however has been a debate in itself. Many researchers have argued over the term 'Kodály method' -because Kodaly did not actually write a method. The compositions and writings of Kodály offer a broad resource of music study, pedagogy and philosophy based on concepts and principles of approach.<sup>56</sup> It is evident in the above quotation from Szilvay, where he refers to his training using the "so-called Kodály method.

The same can be said about *Colourstrings*: it is not a method so much as a resource for a musically rich upbringing. Each methodical step is in the hands of the teacher and parents, with the student being the teacher's guide.<sup>57</sup> In Szilvay's description of *Colourstrings*, he refers to it not as a method but as a part of childhood and family life:

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<sup>54</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 28.

<sup>55</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 71.

<sup>56</sup> Mark Williams, "Philosophical Foundations of the Kodály Approach to Education," *Kodaly Envoy* vol 40, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 7, accessed April 7, 2014, <https://openmusiclibrary.org/article/159370/>.

<sup>57</sup> Viksten, 15.

Broadly, this is not a method, but it is a musical upbringing, or, this is a normal upbringing through music. So, it is for families and for parents a help, a device: music.<sup>58</sup>

### **Conclusion of Related Research**

The review of related research identified several gaps in the knowledge of *Colourstrings*. Past reviews of the *Colourstrings* violin materials are limited to outdated editions and offer suggestions only on etude materials after using *Colourstrings*. The teacher training courses in *Colourstrings* offer an effective means into the application of *Colourstrings*; however, no research to date provides analysis of these courses. The application of *Colourstrings* has only been observed at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, and for the most part of Géza Szilvay, while interviews about *Colourstrings* are for the most part with Szilvay.

### **1.5 Research Methods**

The focus of this study was to investigate student development through and beyond *Colourstrings* in the way that Szilvay had intended; therefore, how it is applied at the East-Helsinki Music Institute. The research methods included analysis of the *Colourstrings* materials and relevant writings made by the author, field observations, and interviews with experienced teachers. Patton endorsed these methods as characteristics of qualitative inquiry,<sup>59</sup> which were similar to those employed in Mitchell's study.<sup>60</sup> However, Kervin, Vialle, Herrington and Okely added that a

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<sup>58</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 30.

<sup>59</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1990), 10.

<sup>60</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 19.

‘multiplicity of viewpoints’ is a further characteristic of qualitative study,<sup>61</sup> which consequently offers a ‘thick description’ of the topic. ‘Thick description’ is “the descriptive data gathered from multiple sources to build up a ‘rich’ and ‘thick’ account of what is being studied.”<sup>62</sup> The multiple viewpoints of observers and *Colourstrings* teachers (including Géza Szilvay) have allowed this study to give a more holistic inquiry than Mitchell.

A key part of this research was forming the initial questions for the participants, which primarily required thorough knowledge and understanding of *Colourstrings*. Not only did this include an analysis of the *Colourstrings* materials, but also data that has been collected by researchers (including the author) in the observation of *Colourstrings* in practice.

## **Interviews**

This study ultimately comprises interviews with Géza Szilvay, *Colourstrings* teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute and a certified *Colourstrings* teacher in Australia. Structured and semi-structured interviews were carried out for the purposes of this research in order to explore the different experiences and perspectives of both Géza Szilvay and other *Colourstrings* violin teachers. Kervin, Vialle, Herrington and Okely differentiated the two interview methods stating that “in a structured interview, open-ended questions are developed to frame the discussion and only these are used. In a semi-structured interview, open-ended questions are still devised but during the interview the interviewer is free to probe the answers to ascertain additional

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<sup>61</sup> Lisa Kervin, Wilma Vialle, Jan Herrington, Tony Okely, *Research for Educators* (Australia: Cengage Learning), 2006, 37.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

information.”<sup>63</sup> The interview with Géza Szilvay was made on the May 10, 2016 via telephone and was semi-structured. The interviews with the *Colourstrings* teachers were by e-mails during a period from June to October 2016 and remained structured.

In contrast to Mitchell’s research, the interviews in this project included several teachers including a certified *Colourstrings* teacher in Australia, which resulted in multiple sources and descriptive data to be used for this study. Kervin, Vialle, Herrington and Okely described benefits of the use of descriptive data from multiple sources as helping to “build up a ‘rich’ and ‘thick’ account of what is being studied.”<sup>64</sup> The result is a more holistic and all-encompassing picture of *Colourstrings* teaching in practice.

### **Observations**

One of the purposes of qualitative research is that it focuses on a setting such as a classroom or school for example, and makes use of participants to gather data (in this instance: teachers and students).<sup>65</sup> Observation is a data gathering technique of qualitative inquiry used in this research, however, it can be limited by interpretation and, potentially, bias.<sup>66</sup> In response to this, a multitude of observations made by previous researchers as well as my own were used to help establish consistency and enhance the accuracy of accounts.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Kervin et al., 88.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>65</sup> Kervin et al., 79.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 87.

## **Experimental Research**

Experimental research contributed to this research as it helped provide a deeper understanding of the *Colourstrings* material and assisted in determining the effects from the data. The experimental research approach involved using *Colourstrings* and the data collected from research into my own teaching practice. The experimental research method can be useful in establishing implications of a methodology,<sup>68</sup> however it was limited in this study due to the fact that the *Colourstrings* violin program is for five to six years of study before progression to traditional violin repertoire,<sup>69</sup> while the scope for of study examined in this project was limited to less than four years. Nevertheless, the combination of interviewing a certified *Colourstrings* teacher in Australia and experimental research contributed to ideas for developing methods of implementation in the Australian context.

## **Data Analysis**

A summary of the data analysis comprises field observations from several researchers (including myself), Géza Szilvay's writings and video recordings of his work, interview transcripts and experimental research. This outcome presents raw data, as well as a 'thick description' of student development through and beyond *Colourstrings*. In analysing the data, new musical sources emerged for review and became the content for a programme of violin study to follow on from *Colourstrings*. While this research used similar methods to Mitchell, the difference in data is substantial given that the *Colourstrings* materials have greatly expanded, there are more teachers using *Colourstrings* at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, and Szilvay

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>69</sup> Homfray, 78.

has contributed more writings, speeches and recordings of him teaching on the Internet.<sup>70</sup>

### **Organisation of Thesis**

The review of literature most relevant to this study includes the *Colourstrings* materials, which is examined in Chapter 2. This included Szilvay's speeches and writings, which aid in the interpretation of the materials and how they function. Observations made at the East-Helsinki Music Institute and teacher-training courses are included in Chapter 3, which help to define some key characteristics of Szilvay, violin teachers and students at the Institute. The research findings were informed by the interviews with Szilvay, violin teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute and a certified *Colourstrings* violin teacher in Australia. Chapter 4 presents the data from these interviews, while Chapter 5 concludes the research findings along with implications for violin study through and beyond *Colourstrings*.

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<sup>70</sup> "Home", *International Miniddlers*, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://sarestoakatemia.org/minifiddlers/>.

## Chapter 2

### Overview of the *Colourstrings* Violin System

This chapter details how a violinist is trained through *Colourstrings* by reviewing and outlining the materials. A clear overview of the material shows the next steps that may be taken after *Colourstrings* training. Existing published overviews of the *Colourstrings* violin materials are now outdated, therefore it was necessary to analyse the new publications and updated editions of the *Colourstrings* violin books.<sup>71</sup> This review involved analysing the writings of Géza Szilvay, including the two separate editions of the *Colourstrings Violin ABC Handbook for Teachers and Parents*<sup>72</sup> as they both contribute in different ways towards gaining a deeper understanding of the *Colourstrings* materials and how they operate.

#### 2.1 Szilvay's Writings

Géza Szilvay's instructional guides for teaching *Colourstrings* students as used in this project both have the title *Violin ABC Handbook for Teachers and Parents* – however, one was published in 1977 and one in 2010. These dates relate to the very early years and the most recent years of Szilvay's teaching career at the East-Helsinki Music Institute. Both *Handbooks* provide brief instructions on how to teach each page of the

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<sup>71</sup> The *Colourstrings* books for violin reviewed in this study were those published from 2005 to 2015.

<sup>72</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC Handbook for Teachers and Parents*, 1977 and 2010 publications.

*Colourstrings Violin ABC* books,<sup>73</sup> however they differ in content because *Colourstrings* material had expanded so much across the years.

One of the more significant aspects of the *Handbooks* is that they reveal Szilvay's goals with *Colourstrings*. In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that these goals are linked to Zoltán Kodály's philosophies, upon which Szilvay built *Colourstrings*.<sup>74</sup> Szilvay believes that violin playing can grow to become a life-long activity for any child,<sup>75</sup> however the question arises as to how best to do it.<sup>76</sup> In approaching this issue, Szilvay presents the reader (teacher) with three sub-questions to consider: "What shall I teach? How shall I teach? Why do I teach?"<sup>77</sup> This quotation shows that the *Colourstrings* materials and *Handbooks* do not necessarily form a step-by-step method for the teacher to follow, but rather encourage the teacher to self-analyse and potentially generate many issues to consider within the three main aspects of their own teaching approach: materials, methods and philosophies. Szilvay's response to these questions was to create a child-centred approach, one that eliminates – or, at least reduces - the hardships of violin-playing by using games, story-telling and the child's own imagination to help maintain a sense of joy at each learning step.<sup>78</sup> Each step can be worked out from using the students' perspective as a source for finding understanding and enjoyment of their work. The materials provide a resource to help teachers define this approach, while the *Handbooks* provide guidance for teachers to realise Szilvay's intentions.

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<sup>73</sup> Instructions for the *Yellow Pages* are included in the 2010 edition of the *Handbook*.

<sup>74</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 141.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (Helsinki: Fazer, 1977), 3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 141.



### **Objectives of *Colourstrings***

The properly trained *Colourstrings* violinist is a well-rounded musician. Their skills with the instrument should be connected and balanced with non-instrumental abilities, such as theoretical understanding of music, aural training, reading and expressiveness.<sup>79</sup> After twenty-five years of teaching, Szilvay listed the following typical characteristics of *Colourstrings*-trained students:

- Fine intonation
- Equally sophisticated technique in both hands
- A developed musical intellect
- Good ability to read music
- An artistic aptitude for musical timbre, nuance, detail and phrasing
- Rich creativity developed through transposing, transforming, improvising and composing
- Soloistic activity developed together with chamber musicianship and playing as a member of the orchestra.<sup>80</sup>

The above-mentioned typical characteristics of *Colourstrings*-trained students as quoted from Szilvay demonstrate that his students gain experience in a variety of skills and attributes from his teaching. The key objective behind these experiences according to Szilvay “is to stimulate the youngster to develop as a rounded personality.”<sup>81</sup> With this in mind Szilvay is suggesting that the violin teacher should not limit their attention on the actions of the students’ playing, but also to focus on the individual behaviour of students by engaging with them as people.

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<sup>79</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 2.

<sup>80</sup> Szilvay, “*Colourstrings*,” 54-55.

<sup>81</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (1977), 6.

*Colourstrings* is centred on the individual child. The learning experiences of the student are crucial for maintaining a positive working attitude and having the violin as a life-long musical companion, which Szilvay expresses as one of his ultimate objectives:

Most important is the experience of the child while playing his violin that he has succeeded in bringing music to life and has had the joy of doing so. This experience is important for his later attitude toward work and for the possibility of his taking pleasure in work.<sup>82</sup>

The emphasis in Szilvay's statement seems to be more inclined towards the child's attitude and not so much the violin. This may suggest that playing at a high level is less important to Szilvay than the child's attitude; however, fifty-nine of his first sixty-eight beginner students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute went onto become professional violinists,<sup>83</sup> while Banney noted that hardly any of Szilvay's students will quit studying the violin.<sup>84</sup> A joyful attitude contributes to joyful violin playing. After teaching for over twenty-five years at the Institute, Szilvay claimed that half of his students entered the music profession, whilst the remainder became "serious connoisseurs of music."<sup>85</sup> It is fair to say that this means his students who have not entered the profession still enjoy playing the violin as a lifelong musical activity. It is also reasonable to suppose that not every child would want to become a professional violinist, but the quality of Szilvay's teaching and his manner with children must be significant since so many of his students have entered the profession. Szilvay accepts

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<sup>82</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (1977), 7.

<sup>83</sup> Colourstrings Australia: [colourstrings.com.au](http://colourstrings.com.au)

<sup>84</sup> Banney, 1.

<sup>85</sup> Szilvay, "Colourstrings," 54-55.

the fact that the music profession is not something for all of his students but rather a possibility instead:

Naturally, not every young beginner will seek to become a professional but the first steps in basic musicianship should be the same for the future professional and the serious amateur. While using the book, (*Colourstrings* Violin Books), the teacher should not take the attitude of pushing the child into professionalism but should bear in mind that the child may become a great artist on this instrument. This sort of approach in the teacher and parent will create a relaxed atmosphere, nevertheless with an awareness of responsibility for the child's future.<sup>86</sup>

### **Influences of Szilvay and *Colourstrings***

Given that the *Colourstrings* materials are so closely connected with Kodály, an understanding of Kodály's principles is absolutely necessary for effective use of *Colourstrings*. Szilvay went so far as to say that this close connection could be seen as a weakness of *Colourstrings*, because it means that all new teachers need to undergo Kodály training to some extent, particularly to gain understanding of relative solmisation.<sup>87</sup>

Solmisation is a device used in association with pitch to indicate melodic intervals and employs the following syllabic names originally fashioned by Guido of Arezzo of the eleventh-century: *Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti*. Relative solmisation (also referred to as *Tonic Sol-Fa*) is a system that adopts these syllables for the purposes of aural recognition. It was developed by Sarah Ann Glover (1785 – 1867) and pioneered by John Curwen (1816 – 1880) in the 1840s as he connected the syllables with hand-

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<sup>86</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

signs.<sup>88</sup> The syllables of the Major scale begin from *Do* and the minor scale is treated as a mode of the Major, beginning from *La*.<sup>89</sup> Kodály adapted relative solmisation for the use in Hungarian Schools, which became the primary musical language used for singing.<sup>90</sup>

*Colourstrings* study begins with relative solmisation before introducing the students to the alphabet names (*A B C D E F G*), which is the basis for a fixed system for identifying pitch. By comparison, most violin methods begin with and only use the fixed system of letter-names, or fixed solmisation.<sup>91</sup> Szilvay employs the early use of relative solmisation for the purposes of aural recognition so that the students avoid the need of visual aids on the violin fingerboard, which subsequently allows for transposition of songs to be played at any area of the fingerboard.<sup>92</sup>

Elements of violin technique in Szilvay's teachings and in *Colourstrings* are influenced from Paul Rolland.<sup>93</sup> Rolland's approach to teaching young violin students was built on the objective of using natural physical movements when playing string instruments. He formed ideas from Frederick Matthis Alexander (1869 – 1955)<sup>94</sup> and developed *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* in the 1960s. Throughout Szilvay's *Handbook*, statements and instructions frequently reflect Rolland's ideas,

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<sup>88</sup> See *Curwen Hand Signs*: <http://www.kodaly.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/handsign.pdf>

<sup>89</sup> Alterations of the solmisation syllables are indicated by change of vowel: sharps to 'i', and flats to 'a'.

<sup>90</sup> Andrew Hughes and Edith Gerson-Kiwi, "Solmization," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed July 21, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26154>.

"Tonic Sol-Fa." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev.. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed July 21, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e10334>.

<sup>91</sup> The syllables for *Do, Re, Mi...* are used in place of *A, B, C...* thus making them fixed to these pitches.

<sup>92</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 2.

<sup>93</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 28.

<sup>94</sup> Developed *Alexander Technique*.

such as developing flexibility and encouraging relaxation, for example.<sup>95</sup> Interesting parallels between Szilvay and Rolland are that both dedicated their lives to string teaching, both are Hungarian, and both had professional careers performing in string quartets.

Kodály and Rolland's influence on *Colourstrings* will be linked as much as possible throughout this review of the materials. This is limited only because I am not a qualified Kodály teacher;<sup>96</sup> but have experience of over ten years worth of accumulated Kodály-based training, including teacher workshops. Kodály's writings, publications of the Kodály Institute and studies concerned with Kodály and his philosophies were reviewed to confirm and explore the impact of Kodály's influences on Szilvay's *Colourstrings*.<sup>97</sup>

## 2.2 The Colourstrings Materials

The *Colourstrings* violin materials for analysis in this study consist of twenty-nine books, which are divided into different series.<sup>98</sup> The structure of the violin materials is diagrammed in Figure 1, and identifies the three different series with brackets: *Music Kindergarten*, *Violin School Volumes A-D*, and *Violin School Volumes E, F and Yellow Pages*.

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<sup>95</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 19.

<sup>96</sup> The *Australian Kodály Certificate* (AKC) is the Australian fully accredited and nationally recognised program of teacher training in the Kodály Approach. See *Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia*: <http://www.kodaly.org.au>.

<sup>97</sup> Resources are included in the Bibliography.

<sup>98</sup> This analysis will not include every page of the volumes but rather give a broader view of what a *Colourstrings*-trained violinist might learn on their journey.

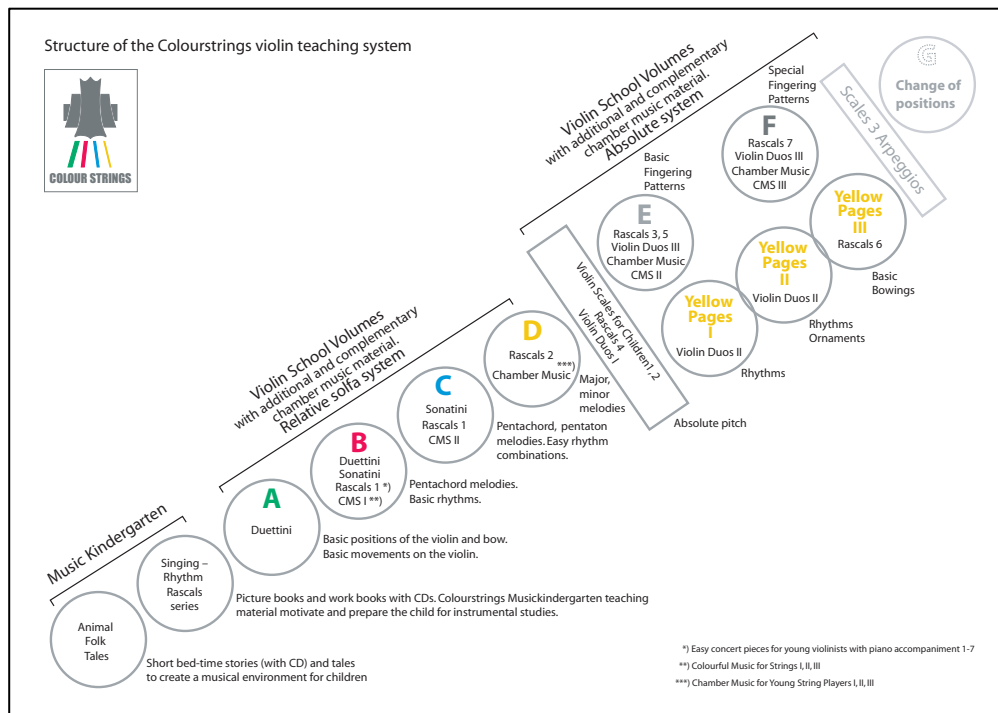


Figure 2.1: The structure of the Colourstrings violin teaching system<sup>99</sup>

Within the second bracket, the series containing the central ‘Violin School Volumes’ in Figure 2.1, there are ‘Additional and Complementary Chamber Music Materials,’ ‘Violin Scales for Children,’ ‘Violin Duos,’ and ‘Violin Rascals.’ These are separate from the core *Violin ABC* and *Yellow Pages* volumes and will be discussed at the end of this chapter. Preceding the ‘Violin School’ is the first series, the ‘Music Kindergarten’ section, which includes materials that were also analysed. Since leading educationists have claimed that the education from age zero to six has the greatest impact on one’s life<sup>100</sup> it was important for this research to investigate the *Colourstrings* material targeted at these infancy years even though they are not directly related to violin playing.

<sup>99</sup> “Structure of the Colourstrings violin teaching system,” Colourstrings, accessed November 4, 2014, <http://colourstrings.fi/downloads/Colourstrings%20taulukko.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> Hattie, Selma, Giordano, *Visible Learning for Teachers* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 19.

### Pre-Instrumental Education

The ‘Music Kindergarten’ series in Figure 1 features pre-instrumental tuition, which involves story telling, singing songs, aural training, and basic musical literacy. The aim of the music kindergarten according to Figure 2.1 is to help “motivate and prepare the child for instrumental studies,” which Szilvay has also suggested that they help engage the child emotionally towards music.<sup>101</sup> The *Colourstrings* materials for the music kindergarten are called *Little Rascals*, *Singing Rascals* and *Rhythm Rascals*.

The *Little Rascals* material includes a series of fairy tale books, CDs and exercise pad for home use, which Szilvay describes as creating musical “surroundings.”<sup>102</sup> His intention with *Little Rascals* is to bring music into the family circle and create a learning and musical environment for the child. The *Little Rascals* are seven stories that contain the following concepts: noise versus music, low pitch versus high pitch, short sounds versus long sounds, soft sounds versus loud sounds, emotions, tone colours of different instruments, beat, meter, tempo and pulse.<sup>103</sup> Szilvay explained that each story contains “a rudiment of music but does not teach it directly, only introduces it entertainingly.”<sup>104</sup> The period for using *Little Rascals* is from infancy to when the child goes to school. During this time the child unconsciously learns musical concepts and develops his or her singing voice.<sup>105</sup> This goal with the *Little Rascals* reflects Kodály’s principle that music education should start as early as possible.<sup>106</sup> Szilvay expressed the significance of early musical interaction of the parents with the child in the opening statement in his *Handbook*:

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<sup>101</sup> Szilvay, “Colourstrings,” 51.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> “Kodály Concept”, Kodály Inttitute of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, accessed December 20, 2016, [kodaly.hu/zoltan\\_kodaly/kodaly\\_concept](http://kodaly.hu/zoltan_kodaly/kodaly_concept).

Zoltán Kodály, the world-famous composer and pedagogue, went so far as to say that ‘The time to start teaching a child music is nine months before it is born!’ and he was hardly exaggerating the importance of starting music-training early.<sup>107</sup>

The *Little Rascals* material is not currently available in English however it is understood to be so soon.<sup>108</sup> Parents and teachers can gather their own materials for children based on Szilvay’s intentions with *Rascals* however; Szilvay recommended that these materials should be suitable for the child in terms of text, length, form, vocal range, intervals and melody.<sup>109</sup> The best resources, said by Szilvay, are local folk or nursery songs.<sup>110</sup> Kodály shared the same philosophy, known as the “musical mother-tongue principle.”<sup>111</sup>

The *Singing and Rhythm Rascals* series includes picture books, CDs and exercise books, and similarly to the *Little Rascals* they were planned for family use.<sup>112</sup> That said however, the material is designed for children between the ages of three to seven years, which therefore suggests that they can be used in the Kindergarten.<sup>113</sup> The books and CDs help the child to achieve a subconscious level of musical awareness, which, through the exercise books, can be raised to a semi-conscious level.<sup>114</sup> From learning a song by ear children can translate the rhythmic elements of the song into

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<sup>107</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (1977), 3.

<sup>108</sup> Pretto, 7.

<sup>109</sup> Szilvay, “Colourstrings,” 52.

<sup>110</sup> Géza Szilvay, *The Singing Rascals “TI-TI,” Exercise Book*. (Helsinki: Tammi, 1994), 2.

<sup>111</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, rev. ed, DVD-ROM (Kecskemét, Hungary: Foundation for the Kecskemét Kodály Institute, 2007).

<sup>112</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

<sup>113</sup> Pretto, 7.

<sup>114</sup> Voima, 14.



the rhythm time names relatively easily and consequently learn to write them.<sup>115</sup> The tools used for aural and musical literacy in Kodály's educational materials are similar to those in the *Singing and Rhythm Rascals*. These include the rhythm time names according to the *Galin-Paris-Chevé* method (*ta, ti-ti*),<sup>116</sup> rhythm 'pipe-writing' or 'stick notation', the relative solmisation and its associated handsigns.<sup>117</sup>

*Singing and Rhythm Rascals* aims to help prepare children physically for violin study as well as aurally, intellectually and emotionally. A key component of the music kindergarten, which has not been directly mentioned thus far, is the organic connection between singing and movement. Pretto observed that the *Rascals* materials utilised at the Music Kindergarten of the East-Helsinki Music Institute involved interactive games and other movement activities to accompany the songs, such as clapping, swinging, marching and skipping.<sup>118</sup> These are similar to the activities that Kodály practitioners use when teaching children.<sup>119</sup> A common characteristic about these games is that they employ activities that develop gross motor skills, which can consequently enhance the child's physical development, coordination skills and sensory-motor skills.<sup>120</sup> Since these skills are indispensable to violin playing, it can be linked to the widespread success of violin students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute as its Musical Kindergarten involves two years of doing musical games,

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<sup>115</sup> Szilvay, *The Singing Rascals* "TI-TI," 5.

<sup>116</sup> Bernarr Rainbow, "Galin-Paris-Chevé method," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed July 21, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10531>.

<sup>117</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

<sup>118</sup> Pretto, 7.

<sup>119</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

<sup>120</sup> Harriet G. Williams and Eva V. Monsma, "Assessment of Gross Motor Development", *Psychoeducational assessment of preschool children* (2007), 397.

dance, play, clapping, singing, and aural and theory training without playing instruments.<sup>121</sup>

The *Colourstrings* materials collectively form a musically flowing pathway from infancy through to pre-school and then to instrumental study. Szilvay described it as three steps:

Within Colourstrings, Little Rascals, Singing Rascals, and Instrumental Tutors form a three-step unit where musical education starts at a tender age and develops uninterruptedly in an ever-increasing way.<sup>122</sup>

Over fifty children's songs and folk melodies can be learned in the *Colourstrings* pre-instrumental materials. Similar characters and melodies from the songs are encountered in the violin books, which can help serve the instrumental teaching in that something known can be used to help teach something unknown. Szilvay's objective for smooth continuity of music education is in line with Kodály's concept of singing and reading before playing an instrument;<sup>123</sup> however, Mitchell described Szilvay's opinions as "non-static",<sup>124</sup> because in his interview with Mitchell, Szilvay did not insist on musical kindergarten as a prerequisite – but prefers it.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 42.

<sup>122</sup> Szilvay, "Colourstrings," 55.

<sup>123</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

<sup>124</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 48.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

### 2.3 Colourstrings Instrumental School: Violin ABC Book A-D

The *Colourstrings* instrumental schools use the characters, melodies, and rhythms of the *Rascals* series. The core tutor books, *Violin ABC Book A-D*, are divided into chapters that introduce one new concept at a time while repeating prior elements.<sup>126</sup> Each new concept learnt is practiced through exercises and folk songs, and children have the freedom to improvise and compose their own music along the way. *Books A - D* are designed to use the child's imagination to teach musical concepts as they employ the use of colours and playful pictures instead of traditional notation. This suggests that they are more suited to young children rather than older beginners.

The claims among which age to begin violin study are reasonably consistent. Szilvay prefers children who are five or six years old, however this is flexible to four or seven depending on the child.<sup>127</sup> Voima agreed that the appropriate ages for starting the violin through *Colourstrings* are between four to seven years old.<sup>128</sup> One reason for these claims is possibly due to the heavy use of colours and pictures particularly in *Violin ABC Book A-B*. Four colours introduce the four strings of the violin from using Kerekes' *Colour Scale*,<sup>129</sup> as well as a picture of a green 'bear', red 'daddy', blue 'mummy' and yellow 'birdie'.<sup>130</sup> A young child may be more attracted to these, while a child older than eight years may find the idea too simple. Voima agreed that the material is designed to suit a young child's imagination and not necessarily interesting to older children.<sup>131</sup> However Rogers found that the use of colour in conjunction with musical notation had a positive effect on older students with their abilities to sight-

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<sup>126</sup> Voima, 16.

<sup>127</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 40.

<sup>128</sup> Voima, 16.

<sup>129</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (1977), 6.

<sup>130</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book A*, rev. ed. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2005), 1.

<sup>131</sup> Voima, 16.

read,<sup>132</sup> which suggests that Szilvay's idea may be adapted in other ways so that older students can benefit.

### **Folk Song and the Mother Tongue Principle**

The period for using the *Violin ABC Book A-D* volumes is for the first five or six years of instrumental playing and are to be used before traditional violin repertoire is introduced.<sup>133</sup> The materials in *Violin ABC Book A-D* are primarily based on children's songs and folk songs, rather than traditional violin repertoire. This may not only be because the books extend from the *Rascals* series, but also because of the suitability of using children's songs and folk songs for young beginners. With the help of folksongs, Szilvay used their melodies and rhythms to introduce students to musical, technical, intellectual and aesthetic notions in *Violin ABC*.<sup>134</sup> Figures 2.1-2.4 demonstrates how the same folk song can be used in various ways to introduce specific concepts:



**Figure 2.2: Folk song *Swallows in the Sunshine* used to teach basic rhythms.**<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> George Rogers, "Effect of color-coded notation on music achievement of elementary instrumental students", *Journal of Research in Music Education*, no. 39 (Winter), 1991, 71-73.

<sup>133</sup> Homfray, 78.

<sup>134</sup> Szilvay, "Colourstrings," 55.

<sup>135</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book A*, 21.

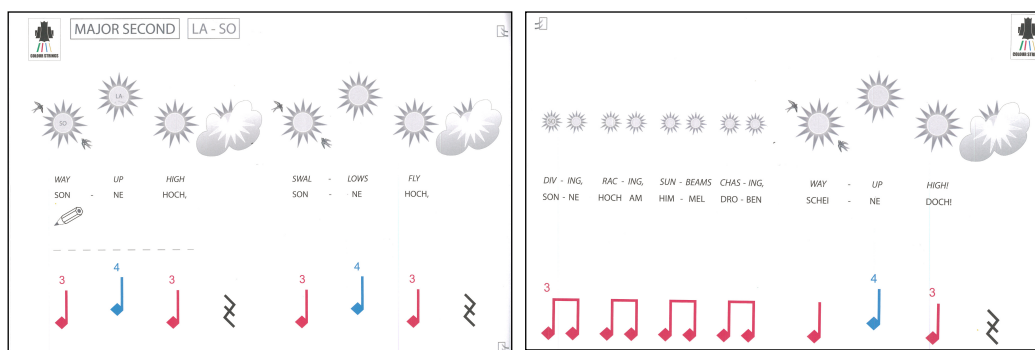


Figure 2.3: *Swallows in the Sunshine* used to teach harmonics in the first position.<sup>136</sup>

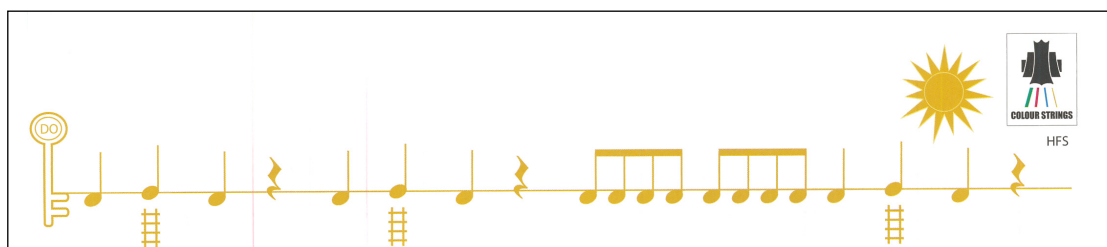


Figure 2.4: *Swallows in the Sunshine* used to represent the Major 2<sup>nd</sup> interval on a one-line system and exercise the stopping movement of the first finger.<sup>137</sup>

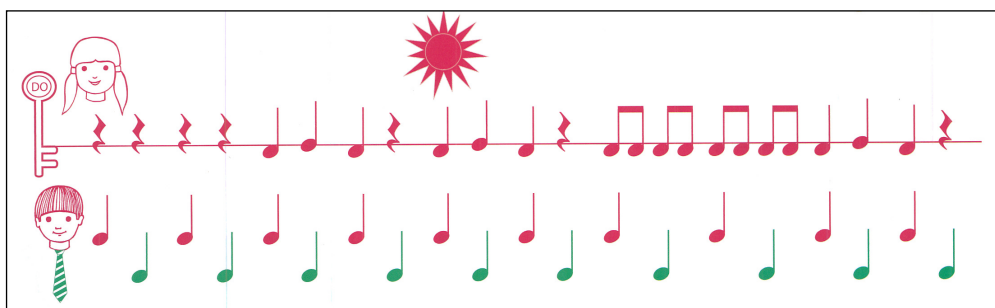
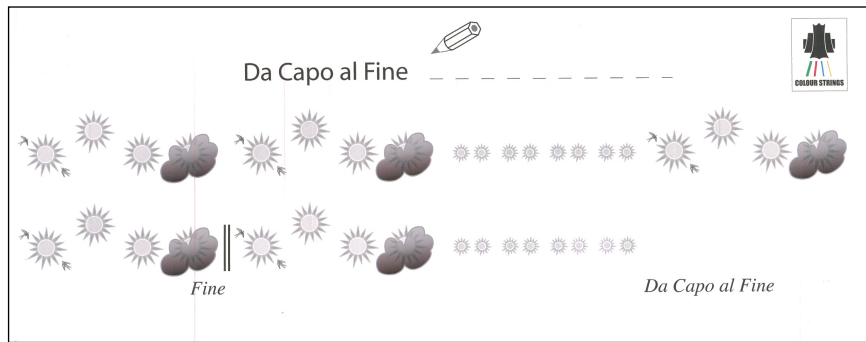


Figure 2.5: *Swallows in the Sunshine* used with added duo part<sup>138</sup>

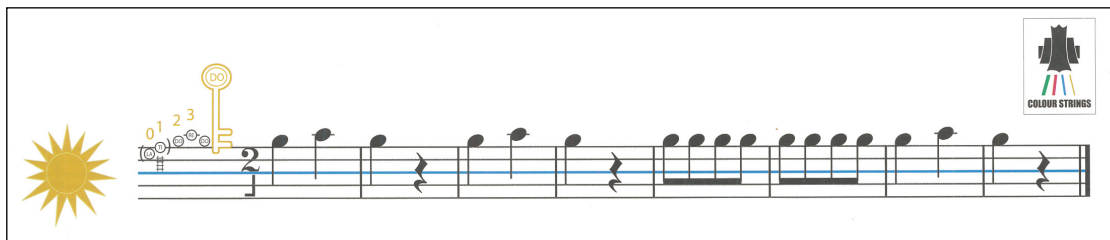
<sup>136</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book A*, 56-57.

<sup>137</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book B*, 7.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 2.6: *Swallows in the Sunshine* used to demonstrate 'Da Capo al Fine.'** <sup>139</sup>



**Figure 2.7: *Swallows in the Sunshine* used to demonstrate and exercise the lowered 2<sup>nd</sup> finger hand position on the E-string.** <sup>140</sup>

As naturally as a child learns his or her native language, (mother-tongue), before learning foreign languages, Kodály believed that they should also learn their native musical language.<sup>141</sup> *Colourstrings* appreciates this principal by encouraging teachers to acquaint their students with the musical culture of their nation.<sup>142</sup> Blank pages are reserved in *Book A-D* for the teachers to insert folk melodies and for students to write their own compositions.

The mother-tongue principle applied to music education can cause difficulties in the Australian context given our lack of folk music heritage and its heterogenous population. The claim can be made that the mother-tongue principle is a limitation

<sup>139</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book B*, 61.

<sup>140</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book D*, 3.

<sup>141</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

<sup>142</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

with employing Kodály methodology in Australia, but it should not be avoided. Cuskelly expressed that Kodály's mother tongue principle "provides an excellent framework for language acquisition,"<sup>143</sup> therefore using material from English-speaking nations other than Australia may be the simplest option. This is exemplified by Banney's *Tigers and Teapots* project,<sup>144</sup> which was chiefly inspired by *Colourstrings*.<sup>145</sup> Banney's example, in conjunction with Cuskelly's claims, demonstrate that *Colourstrings* in Australia can be viewed as an opportunity for the teacher and pupil to explore the musical heritages of Australia's founding nations, the students' own family backgrounds and if applicable, aid in their knowledge of foreign languages. Backgrounds aside, a violinist trained through *Colourstrings Violin ABC Book A-D* would have learnt a great quantity and variety of folk music because Szilvay believes that children should be exposed to folk music from all around the world.<sup>146</sup> This research found over three hundred folksongs sourced from over twenty-five countries exist in *Colourstrings Violin ABC Book A-D*, as well as forty children's songs composed by Kodály.<sup>147</sup> By comparison, Mitchell found 117 folk songs and thirty-four songs by Kodály in earlier editions of *Violin ABC*.<sup>148</sup> This demonstrates how much *Colourstrings* has expanded over the years and further suggests that one should have experience with Kodály's children's songs as well as folk songs in order to use *Colourstrings* effectively.

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<sup>143</sup> James Cuskelly, "A Case Study Using Kodály Principles in a Language Immersion Setting," *Australian Kodály Journal* (2011), 25.

<sup>144</sup> A recorded collection of children's songs and folk music sung all over the English-speaking world.

<sup>145</sup> "About Tigers and Teapots," *Tigers and Teapots*, accessed May 11, 2014, [tigersandteapots.com.au/performers](http://tigersandteapots.com.au/performers).

<sup>146</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 33.

<sup>147</sup> An analysis of these songs and their origins are shown in **Appendix A**.

<sup>148</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 59.

It is unclear if having a wealthy upbringing of folksongs makes a better violinist, but it is an interesting claim. Through children's songs and folk songs one can demonstrate musical patterns, phrasing, forms and structures that appear in art music of the great composers, only at a smaller scale. The children's song *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* has a ternary form for example. Kodály believed that the foundation of classical music comes from folksongs,<sup>149</sup> therefore the more folk music learnt then the more informed would be the musician. In light of this it may be easier for *Colourstrings* violinists to identify connections between folksongs and composed music.

In the chronology of *Colourstrings* training, the many folksongs in *Violin ABC Book A - D* are learnt before music of the great composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Schubert. If we compare with another system, for example the *Suzuki Violin School*, there are six traditional folksongs and five little songs composed by Shinichi Suzuki before his book introduces repertoire by composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach and Robert Schumann.<sup>150</sup> Pohjola and Mitchell compared *Colourstrings* and *Suzuki* agreeing that there are very few pieces of folk music after the first book of *Suzuki* and following these pieces the method books are predominantly comprised of music from the Baroque period.<sup>151</sup> In contrast, *Colourstrings* presents hundreds of excerpts and pieces of folk music from the very first *Singing Rascals* Books through to the final volumes of the violin school, and many folk songs are learnt before music of the great composers.

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<sup>149</sup> Zoltán Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, compiled by Ildikó Herboly Kocsár, (Budapest: International Kodály Society, 2002), 23-25.

<sup>150</sup> Shinichi Suzuki, *The Suzuki Violin School*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (USA: Summy-Birchard, 2007), 3.

<sup>151</sup> Pohjola, 8.



## Integrated Teaching

The *Violin ABC Book A-D* enable integrated teaching of musical intellect, musical hearing and emotional enrichment as well as the violin technique.<sup>152</sup> Individual concepts such as making a long sound or a short sound for example is introduced step by step so that the student is able to recognise it through hearing, reading, singing and playing. The progression of playing pieces, in particularly violin repertoire, is inevitably slower than other beginner violin methods due to the fact that this integrated teaching is an equal pat. This however can be considered one of *Colourstrings*' strengths because it allows every student to make continuous small steps in their learning, as opposed to a student making big leaps quickly and then getting stuck later with remedial work when progress is not made secure.

Most beginner methods immediately use traditional music notation, which inevitably shows many symbols to represent pitch and rhythm. *Colourstrings*, in contrast, begins without the line system and uses the Paris-Chéve time names, (TA, Ti-Ti),<sup>153</sup> to express rhythm durations and are represented by pipe notation.<sup>154</sup> The absence of the five-line system allows the student to focus on rhythm rather than pitch, therefore the initial tasks of *Violin ABC Book A* are targeted at coordinating rhythms of songs with the violin movements.<sup>155</sup> The process reflects Kodály's belief that the complications of melody and rhythm require a slow and careful progression:

The difficulties of rhythm and melody are so complicated that if we do not overcome them one by one, we will never be able to cope with them. First,

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<sup>152</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 2.

<sup>153</sup> Lois Choksy, *The Kodály Method 1*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999), 12.

<sup>154</sup> The same system is adopted in Kodály methodology for the reason that the language corresponds to how the rhythm sounds.

<sup>155</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book A*, contents.

one must be able to read rhythm and if one can do that fluently, the, separately, one may go on to pitch. Only afterwards are the two connected. The teaching of notes placed on the five-line staves can be started later.<sup>156</sup>

Pitch is primarily studied through relative solmisation after the initial introduction of colours in *Violin ABC Book A*. The first notes introduced are *Do, Re, Mi, So* and *La*,<sup>157</sup> before progressing through the diatonic scale. This is contrary to Mitchell's analysis, where the earlier editions of *Violin ABC* developed through the diatonic scale and consequently did not reflect Kodály's methodology.<sup>158</sup> Since Mitchell's review, *Violin ABC Book A-D* was revised and now includes harmonics, or 'flageolettes', to teach pentatonic songs before diatonic songs and is thus aligned with Kodály methodology.

Musical reading using relative solmisation is represented in a way that is unique to *Colourstrings*.<sup>159</sup> It begins with the use of a one-line stave system, followed by a two-line system before progressing to the traditional five-line system. After the introduction of the solfège syllables and related handsigns in *Colourstrings Violin ABC Book A*,<sup>160</sup> a picture of a lever lock key with the word 'DO' inside the bow is used to show the position of 'DO' on a one-line stave system.<sup>161</sup> This idea is extended in *Book B* where the notes 'DO-RE-MI' are introduced one by one, while a second line is added for the notes 'FA' and 'SO'.<sup>162</sup> This progression is shown in Figure 2.2 and 2.3.

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<sup>156</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 25-27.

<sup>157</sup> Pitches of the Pentatonic Scale.

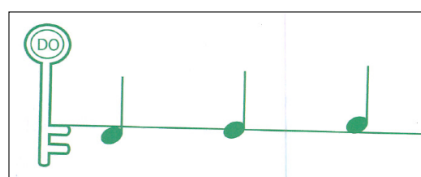
<sup>158</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 33-34.

<sup>159</sup> Sándor, Járdányi and Szervánszky's *Violin Schule* incorporates the use of relative solmisation, however it is presented on the traditional five-line system.

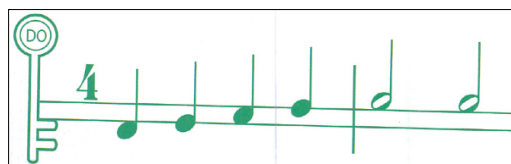
<sup>160</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book A*, 81.

<sup>161</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book B*, rev. ed. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2005), 5.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

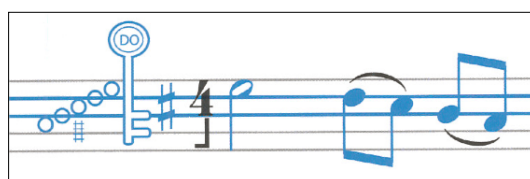


**Figure 2.8: DO, RE, MI.** <sup>163</sup>



**Figure 2.9: DO, RE, MI, FA, SO, SO.** <sup>164</sup>

The two-line system, learnt in *Book B*, is used in conjunction with the traditional five-line stave system in *Book C* to allow a smooth transition to traditional notation. The pitches for each of the songs are still shown with their relative string colour and two-coloured lines, while the remaining lines of the stave are black. This way the student can clearly see where the pitches of each string go in relation to the traditional five-lines, (see Figure 2.4).



**Figure 2.10: Two-line system emphasised over the traditional five-line stave.** <sup>165</sup>

All of the notes used in *Violin ABC Book D* are in the standard black and white, however a single blue line is used on the stave to show the position of the ‘mummy’ string, (A-string) and coloured fingerings are used for selected notes. This develops

<sup>163</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book B*, 18.

<sup>164</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book B*, 50.

<sup>165</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book C*, rev. ed. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2005), 7.

throughout *Book D* to a slightly bold, black line and then in the latter half of the book it shows the traditional five-line system without alterations, however, coloured fingerings remain consistent throughout the whole book (see Figures 2.5 - 2.7).

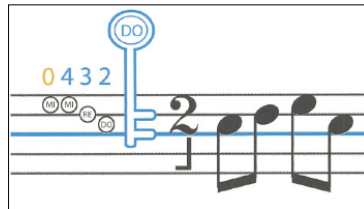


Figure 2.11: Single blue line on staff.<sup>166</sup>

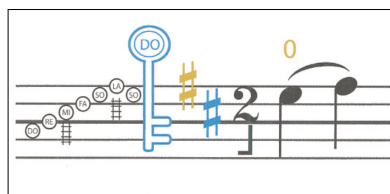


Figure 2.12: Slightly bold, black line on staff.<sup>167</sup>



Figure 2.13: Traditional five-line staff.<sup>168</sup>

An important feature of musical reading in *Violin ABC Book B-D* is that the any given pitch is not always affiliated with the same solfège syllable, but is calculated by its intervallic relationship to ‘DO’. Szilvay positions the ‘DO’ key on various places on the line system, which demonstrates to the student that ‘DO’ is movable; therefore the notes of the solfège scale are not always played with the same finger but are relative to the ‘DO’, (see Figure 2.5 and 2.6).

<sup>166</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book D*, rev. ed. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2005), 3.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

### Technique – General Posture

Central to the primary training of violin technique in *Colourstrings* is that the teacher is asked to use support holds and guide the movements for the student to acquire.<sup>169</sup> This suggests that technical instructions, through *Colourstrings*, are adaptable to the individual teacher's ideas. Pirko Simojoko, one of Szilvay's ex-students and a *Colourstrings* teacher-trainer was quoted for saying that teaching technique through *Colourstrings* "is very free"<sup>170</sup> to the teacher's own ideas, which Homfray noted as a strength of *Colourstrings*.<sup>171</sup> However, there are principles suggested by Szilvay, for example he claims that is the role of the teacher to mould optimal postural habits in order to make the unnatural violin position feel natural.<sup>172</sup> These are presented in the *Handbook*:

The guidelines for the ideal position of the violin leave room for variation with different individuals... ..Sometimes, variation is even desirable. Sure and accurate positioning of the violin is required by the physiological law of motion, according to which the execution of a movement is perfect only when the desired effect is achieved with the least possible application of force.

Assist the establishment of the violin and bow hold by constantly moulding the position of (the) child and instrument.<sup>173</sup>

These ideas suggested by Szilvay with regards to movement and force are similar to Rolland's principles of movement in string playing, in particularly his emphasis on

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<sup>169</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 5.

<sup>170</sup> Homfray, 81.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Anne Bacon, "Teaching a young beginner their first violin lesson", *The Strad* (November 1, 2013), accessed December 1, 2016, [thestrاد.com/teaching-a-young-beginner-their-first-violin-lesson](http://thestrاد.com/teaching-a-young-beginner-their-first-violin-lesson).

<sup>173</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 7.

the correct use of the body, comfort and free movement in string playing.<sup>174</sup> The difference with Szilvay's suggestion is that he stresses the use of physical assistance, or 'moulding' violin technique. The claim is not that Rolland did not use physical assistance, instead it is suggested the technique of how to apply physical assistance effectively to aid student learning needs to be learned by the teacher through experience and if possible supervision by experienced teachers, rather than the *Handbook*.

### **Right-hand Technique**

The *Violin ABC* materials begin with exercises to train gross motor skills by using whole bow strokes, before progressing to the use of fine motor skills with smaller strokes. The long bow-strokes and multiple string crossings over all of the violin strings, which are primarily used in *Book A-B*, are refined to smaller and quicker movements in *Book C-D* with the introduction of bow divisions, fast rhythm patterns and the *spiccato* stroke. Williams and Monsma found that the period between two to six years old are crucial for developing gross motor skills and aid in the mastery of fine motor skills.<sup>175</sup> This further suggests that preparatory training of gross motor skills is desirable before violin study.

Students discover how to stroke the bow in several ways in *Colourstrings*. The main features of learning how to stroke the bow stem from singing first and foremost, and are also developed through the use of harmonics, which will be discussed in the next paragraph. One of the key activities indicated in the *Handbook* is that the students

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<sup>174</sup> Rolland and Mutschler, 30-32.

<sup>175</sup> Harriet G. Williams and Eva V. Monsma, "Assessment of Gross Motor Development", *Psychoeducational assessment of preschool children* (2007), 397.

vocalise the music and listen before playing it.<sup>176</sup> This is not only used with songs, but also to short rhythms that are associated with words, such as the pupil's name for example.<sup>177</sup> The student must listen to the singing technique to instruct his or her bowing technique. For example, in *Violin ABC Book A*, the way one sings and phrases the word 'mummy' to the rhythm: *TA-TA*, is achieved by using long and smooth bow-strokes giving more emphasis on the first sound than the last sound.<sup>178</sup> It was previously mentioned that the teacher primarily guides these movements and therefore the student does not wholly achieve the sounds, however, it is the role of the teacher to encourage optimum tone production and phrasing from the beginning of *Colourstrings* training.<sup>179</sup> Voima, (a former pupil of Szilvay's) declared that phrasing and quality of sound is in focus from the very first lesson in *Colourstrings*.<sup>180</sup> The concept of singing before playing is line with Kodály, who believed that children should learn to sing first before playing an instrument and further that anyone can find the character of music more easily through singing.<sup>181</sup>

The use of harmonics, or flageolettes, is employed in *Colourstrings* for multiple reasons including how to stroke the bow efficiently. Even though the sounds are more like whistling than singing, in order to get them to sound clean a proficient bow technique is required as suggested by Szilvay:

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<sup>176</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 14.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>178</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book A*, 12.

<sup>179</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

<sup>180</sup> Voima, 5.

<sup>181</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 35.

Harmonics/flute-like notes will not sound cleanly unless the child uses a straight bow with enough speed, length of stroke and right amount of bow hair; thus it also develops the child's bowing technique.<sup>182</sup>

Further advantages of early use of harmonics are that the movements of the bow can be coordinated with movements of the left-hand without the burden of tuning, and the entire fingerboard of the violin can be exploited without the problem of tuning. In *Colourstrings Book A*, and *Book B*, the fundamental movements of violin playing are exploited through left-hand harmonics along the whole fingerboard coordinated with the stroking of the bow. Additionally, *Book C* extends from the basic bow movements covered in *Book A* by introducing double notes with the open strings and harmonics, thus three new bow-arm levels are covered: G-string together with D-string; D-string with A-string and; A-string with E-string.

It can be argued that playing harmonics only helps lighten the left-hand while potentially causing the right-hand to work harder and tense up to achieve a clearer sound. By contrast however, harmonics are used in *Colourstrings* to help develop a freer bow technique:

The harmonics/flute-like notes will not sound cleanly unless the child uses a straight bow with enough speed, length of stroke and the right amount of bow hair; thus it also develops the child's bowing technique.<sup>183</sup>

From this instruction given in the *Handbook*, the harmonics require a certain length of stroke for them to sound clearly, which in practice means quite fast and free-moving

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<sup>182</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 30.

<sup>183</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 30.



bow strokes. The effects of this process encourage not only fluent movement with the bow but also the effect of a fuller sound.<sup>184</sup>

This research has found that although harmonics require a light touch from the fingers of the left hand, the successful playing of harmonics up and down the violin fingerboard helps lighten and release tensions in both hands because it encourages freer movements. The reason may be due to the coordination and unity of the human organism in that the behaviour of one hand can affect the other. Rolland's pedagogical ideas in regards to general posture reflect this because he quotes from one of his chief influences, F.M Alexander:<sup>185</sup>

The unity of the human organism is indivisible.... The parts of the human organism are knit so closely into a unity that any attempt to make a fundamental change in the working of a part is bound to alter the use and adjustment of the whole.<sup>186</sup>

Alexander's philosophy applied to string playing suggests that the general posture and techniques of both right and left hands are connected. In Stein's study of the Alexander technique applied to string playing, however, he established that using the body correctly is most important with beginning students and that the goal of the technique is to achieve ease.<sup>187</sup> This suggests that the movements of both hands for playing the violin should be with minimal force and maximum comfort. The same goal is reflected by Szilvay's instruction mentioned earlier with regards to general

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<sup>184</sup> Since *Colourstrings* has been published, the introduction of teaching children to play harmonics on the violin has revolutionised violin teaching around the world and has influenced violin methods to employ early use of harmonics.

<sup>185</sup> Rolland and Mutschler, 30.

<sup>186</sup> Frederick Matthias Alexander, *The Use of the Self: Its Conscious Direction in Relation to Diagnosis, Functioning and the Control of Reaction* (New York: E. P Dutton and Co., Inc, 1932), 45.

<sup>187</sup> Charles Jay Stein, "The Alexander Technique: Its Basic Principles Applied to the Teaching and Performing of Stringed Instruments," *American String Teacher* 49.3 (August, 1999), 75-77.

posture, as the desired outcome of playing the violin is “achieved with the least possible application of force.”<sup>188</sup>

### **Left-hand Technique**

The notable differences between *Colourstrings Violin ABC* and other violin methods is that it systemically uses left-hand pizzicato and harmonics. These activities exercise the muscle movements of each finger and introduce shifting along the fingerboard. The left-hand pizzicato in three positions on the violin fingerboard can be traced to Rolland’s ‘Shuttle Game’, however Szilvay associates these positions with harmonics whereas this is not the case in Rolland’s exercise.<sup>189</sup>

Using harmonics to teach shifting is not a new concept. Szilvay<sup>190</sup> and Kempter<sup>191</sup> share a similar view that an added benefit of playing harmonics is that a competent bow technique is required in order for the sounds to be clear. Kempter believed in using harmonics to teach shifting, however for Kempter it was best attempted after the student knows how to play one and two-octave scales and she acknowledged that getting a student’s left hand to lighten was “somewhat difficult.”<sup>192</sup> One assumption that can be made from Kempter is that if the student’s hand is fixed in one position for a long period, as it is in many violin methods, the task of moving it becomes more difficult. This is not the case in *Colourstrings* because the left hand moves all around the fingerboard using pizzicato and harmonics in *Book A*, before the stopped tones in first position are introduced in *Book B* and the one-octave scales in *Book D*. A noteworthy exercise, which is frequently used throughout *Book B*, is the repeated

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<sup>188</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 7.

<sup>189</sup> Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study,” 37.

<sup>190</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 18.

<sup>191</sup> Kempter, 88.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

movement of weighting and unweighting each finger.<sup>193</sup> This exercise builds on what the pupil learnt in *Book A* through playing harmonics, however a new sensation is found in the feeling of the string vibrating under the finger. The exercise offers two benefits because students develop tactile understanding of the minimal but sufficient application of force required to stop the string,<sup>194</sup> and the repeated action of pulsing the finger into the string practices the finger vibrato movement.<sup>195</sup>

Relative solmisation is used in *Book B* to introduce the stopping movement of each finger and subsequently the stopped tones in the first position. Similar to the vocal technique used in *Book A*, the exercises in *Book B* require singing the correct pitch using solfège and listening to the vocal sound before playing the note on the instrument.<sup>196</sup> Szilvay described this exercise by instructing, “the ear leads the fingers.”<sup>197</sup> Through employing this concept, transposition of known songs is used as an activity in *Colourstrings* for the students to explore playing in positions other than the first position and also to feel different intervals between the fingers. Consequently a variety of ‘finger patterns’ present themselves. The term ‘finger pattern’ is widespread among violin methods, however, during *Violin ABC Book A-D*, the term is not used. Szilvay expresses the importance of transposition to present new finger patterns in the *Handbook*:

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<sup>193</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book B*, 1.

<sup>194</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 34.

<sup>195</sup> Carl Flesch, *The Art of Violin Playing*, Book 1, ed. and trans. Eric Rosenblith (New York: Carl Fischer, 2000), 22.

<sup>196</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 35.

<sup>197</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

Transposing introduces unconsciously the various finger patterns and children experience that the fingers of the left hand can be in different stopping positions on the fingerboard depending on which finger starts the melody.<sup>198</sup>

As the student learns each new note of the solfège scale on the violin, preparatory tone sets are presented before the songs in *Book B-D*,<sup>199</sup> which according to Szilvay, “serve as an early key signature” and get the student acquainted with the notes within the songs.<sup>200</sup> The tone sets are used for “mini etudes,”<sup>201</sup> suggesting that teachers invent exercises with the given notes to prepare the student for the related song. This activity is similar to what teachers at the *Kodály Institute* do with students for singing.<sup>202</sup> In their demonstration of the activity however, the *Kodály Institute* teacher invited their pupils to improvise with the tone set, thus allowing the students to explore the musical elements of the piece with their own creativity.<sup>203</sup> Although “the aim of improvisation skills is to set the natural creativity of every child free,”<sup>204</sup> it could be proposed that improvising with the musical elements of a piece of music as a preparatory activity strengthens a performer’s ability to perform the music itself.

*Book B-D* employs the use of harmonics in multiple positions, left-hand pizzicato and slur patterns in combination with stopped tones in the first-position to extend the student’s ability in the use of the first position. Szilvay described that the purpose of this training is to prepare the student for repertoire that demands change of position

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<sup>198</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 97.

<sup>199</sup> See Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.6 for examples of tone sets used before the music notation.

<sup>200</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 37.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

and gives emphasis to the downward shifting movement.<sup>205</sup> After this training the student should be able to play vast amounts of repertoire in the first position, and thus be prepared to read and play music as recommended in other methods. In addition, Szilvay suggested that the *Violin Scales for Children 1* should be studied before transferring to another method because the student would be familiar with relative solmisation and not the traditionally used fixed system.<sup>206</sup> This will be discussed later in the chapter.

## 2.4 Violin ABC Book E, F and Yellow Pages

The *Violin ABC Book E, F* and the *Yellow Pages* form an intermediate stage in the structure of *Colourstrings* training:<sup>207</sup> it is where the transition from *Colourstrings* to traditional violin repertoire begins. Although these volumes are almost entirely free from using coloured notes, the materials within are organised according to individual musical and technical concepts. The books form a glossary of violin-related concepts, which Szilvay describes as a “tutor’s lexicon.”<sup>208</sup> This suggests that collectively the books do not form a page-by-page method, but rather a resource for violin playing. *Book E* and *Book F* “complement the Yellow Pages”<sup>209</sup> by focussing on the development of left hand concepts while the *Yellow Pages* series focus on concepts for the right-hand.

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<sup>205</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 37.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>207</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>208</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC Book E* (Helsinki: Fennica Gerhmann, 2009), preface.

<sup>209</sup> Geza Szilvay, *Yellow Pages of the Colourstrings Violin School*, vol.1, *Basic Rhythms* (Helsinki: Fennica Gerhmann, 2010), preface.

As their name suggests, the *Yellow Pages* books are like directories because they catalogue individual concepts of violin playing. The *Yellow Pages 1* and *2* address a variety of rhythm patterns, time signatures and ornaments. *Yellow Pages 3* list all of the basic bow articulations for violin playing.

These volumes [*Yellow Pages*] are designed to teach and develop the feeling for pulse, to assist in the mastering of all rhythms and their combinations, to explain the function of time signatures, to help build a basic knowledge of ornaments and to create a solid basis for virtuosic bow technique.<sup>210</sup>

*Book E* and *F* explore the multiple positions of each finger in the first position, demonstrating that each finger can have a neutral position, a higher or extended position, and a lowered position. The multiple movements of each finger are exercised mainly in the first position, however shifting exercises in the first four positions appear throughout *Book E*. The multiple movements of each finger inevitably introduce the student to chromatic alterations of notes, consequently introducing the melodic minor and harmonic minor scales.<sup>211</sup> *Book F* extends on the mixed positions of the fingers by introducing chromaticism and enharmonics. The final two chapters target double-stops in the first position and the four scale modes: Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian.

The *Violin ABC Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages* offer a rich variety of pedagogical material sourced from many different composers from the early Baroque through to the twentieth century, and these took Szilvay nearly twenty years to collect.<sup>212</sup> Materials were also sourced from a wide range of pre-existing violin methods and

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book E*, 76.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., preface.

etude books, mostly from nineteenth-century and twentieth-century composers for violin study repertoire. New concepts in *Book E*, *F* and *Yellow Pages* are presented methodically in the following way: <sup>213</sup>

- 1 introduction to a new subject
- 2 etudes and exercises
- 3 folk music
- 4 excerpts from the literature
- 5 chamber music
- 6 performance pieces
- (7 appendices)

‘Excerpts from the literature’ refers to extracts from the traditional violin sonata, concerto and performance repertoire. It also includes ‘concertino’ works, which may be more suitable for young violin students in their journey towards playing a full concerto. These works are also widely referred to as ‘student concerti’ by pedagogues and violin methods,<sup>214</sup> reaffirming that they are intended for students. Examples of these works found in *Colourstrings* include concerti by Friederich Seitz, Adolf Huber, Ferdinand K  chler, Oskar Rieding and P  l J  rd  nyi.

Music from the great composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johannes Brahms and Ludwig van Beethoven appear in *Violin ABC Book E*. Most of these works, however, are arrangements and not necessarily from the violin repertoire written by these composers. The significance of the great composers is demonstrated in *Book E* with a photograph of the composer at the top of the page and when they lived, side by side with a blank box for the pupil to draw a picture of a famous person

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> “The Top 10 Student Violin Concertos,” *Consordini musical instruments* (Austin, August 24, 2015), accessed January 8, 2017, [consordini.com/top-student-violin-concertos](http://consordini.com/top-student-violin-concertos).

who lived approximately at the same time in the country relative to the pupil.<sup>215</sup> Szilvay recommended that Australian pupils could draw a picture of an indigenous person for composers who lived during pre-settlement in Australia.<sup>216</sup>

Folk music is used throughout the *Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages*, however the main difference between these later volumes to the early volumes of *Colourstrings* is that folk music is no longer the core repertoire and for the most part is used for duos in the complementary *Colourstrings Violin Duos* series. The folk music is primarily used to demonstrate melodic and rhythmic concepts, such as chromatic alterations and time signatures. Although Szilvay does not mention it, the introduction of musical concepts through a wide variety of folk music subsequently introduces the student to stylistic traditions of different countries.

Teachers and students who have not had a *Colourstrings* background can also make use of *Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages*. According to Szilvay, these volumes can be “invaluable for developmental and remedial purposes” for any teacher, not necessarily one who teaches the beginner *Colourstrings* materials.<sup>217</sup>

## **2.5 Additional and Complementary Material**

### **Scales and Arpeggios**

There are three volumes dedicated to the study of scales and arpeggios in *Colourstrings*. In the study of these scales, students gain an understanding of the fixed letter-name system and intervallic relationships between the tones of scales and

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<sup>215</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book E*, 7.

<sup>216</sup> Géza Szilvay, “Australian Colourstrings Festival: Teacher’s Workshop” (lecture, Fairholme College, Toowoomba, July 9, 2015).

<sup>217</sup> Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book E*, preface.



arpeggios. The students are presented with additional writing activities to help supplement the playing with theoretical understanding. The scales span across one and two octaves, however Szilvay recommended that initially only one octave was preferred so that students do not lose the sense of the tonic.<sup>218</sup>

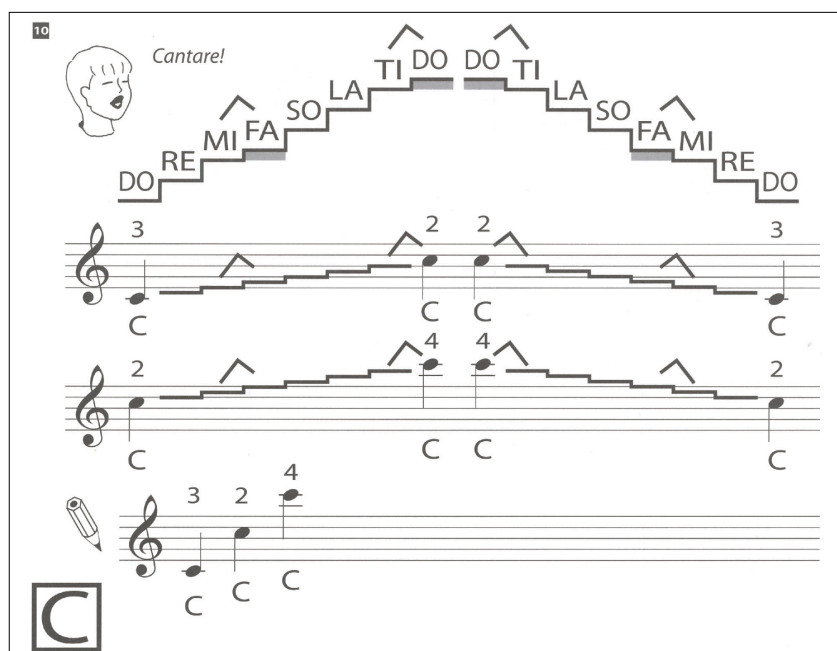
*Violin Scales I* can be used during and after the *Violin ABC Book D* is studied, and is intended to provide transition from relative solmisation to the fixed letter-names system.<sup>219</sup> In *Colourstrings*, the absolute system is referred by alphabet names: *A* through to *G*. Each alphabet letter is introduced one at a time and is affiliated with the tonic note of the scales.<sup>220</sup> From the low tonic note to the high tonic, the one-octave scale is illustrated with big steps and small steps over the stave system rather than music notes, showing the intervals in between each scale tone with vertical lines and the pitch of each note with horizontal lines (see Figure 2.8).

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<sup>218</sup> Szilvay, *Violin Scales for Children* (vol.1), 4.

<sup>219</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 92.

<sup>220</sup> 'DO' for the major or 'LA' for the natural minor.



**Figure 2.14: Using relative solmisation and intervallic steps to introduce absolute letter-names for pitch.<sup>221</sup>**

This representation of the C Major scale shown in Figure 2.8 is interesting because Szilvay has combined three units of language on the one page: solfège, intervals and letter-names. Most scale methods use traditional notation, which consequently looks like a long row of notes ascending and descending. Szilvay’s fun representation of scales avoids the numerous music notes required for traditionally notated scales and gives emphasis to the tonic note. There is also space for the pupil to write the music note as an extra activity (see Figure 2.8). The main purpose of the scale books, in addition to playing the scales, is for students to learn the absolute names of the notes by reading and writing as well as on the fingerboard of the violin.<sup>222</sup> Key signatures, accidentals, time signatures, bar lines, bowings and excessive fingerings have been omitted from the scale books in order to “simplify the pupil’s task.”<sup>223</sup> Szilvay explained that it is left to the teacher what symbols they wish to add to the scales and

<sup>221</sup> Szilvay, *Violin Scales for Children* (vol.1), 10.

<sup>222</sup> Szilvay, *Violin Scales for Children* (vol.1), 4.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

what fingerings to use, however, he encourages the use of singing (or ‘cantare’)<sup>224</sup> and inner hearing for the purposes of playing the scales in tune.<sup>225</sup> Szilvay demonstrated one such activity where the student played each note of the scale slowly, while at the same time singing the upcoming note of the scale and using only one finger up the string.<sup>226</sup> While this activity served as an example of the ear leading the finger, it also showed that a wide variety of fingerings could be used for the scales. Furthermore, the teacher (or another student) is encouraged to play a different octave simultaneously with the student, creating a duet activity to develop listening and tuning.<sup>227</sup>

*Violin Scales 2* extends what is introduced in *Violin Scales 1* by adding chromatic alterations to the letter-names, (sharps, flats and naturals). For example, instead of A Major and A natural minor, the scales are A-flat Major and A-sharp natural minor.<sup>228</sup> The presentation of the scales is the same as *Violin Scales 1*: solfège syllables are used and steps are used to illustrate the scale progression.

*Violin Scales and Arpeggios for Children 3* uses traditional notation for each note of the scales, however; there is a solfège aid attached to the book indicating the interval steps in between each tone of Major and minor scales and arpeggios. *Scales and Arpeggios 3* introduce the melodic minor scale and two arpeggios: tonic triad and subdominant triad in first inversion. It does not include the harmonic minor scale: this is introduced in *Violin ABC Book E*.<sup>229</sup> The order of scales in *Scales and Arpeggios 3* is different to the other volumes as it does not progress in alphabetical order but begins

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<sup>224</sup> See Figure 2.8

<sup>225</sup> Szilvay, *Violin Scales for Children* (vol.1), 4.

<sup>226</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 2, 2011).

<sup>227</sup> Szilvay, *Violin Scales for Children* (vol.1), 4.

<sup>228</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin Scales for Children*, vol.2, rev. ed. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2008), 6-7.

<sup>229</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Violin ABC: Book E*, 91.

from C Major and its relative A minor. Each key then progresses to its relative subdominant key in cyclic fashion, which Szilvay indicates to “see Carl Flesch scale system.”<sup>230</sup> Carl Flesch (1873 – 1944) was renowned as a violin teacher and for his contribution to violin pedagogy and his *Scale System* is widely used by professional players and teachers.

### **Sonatas with Piano**

There are eight books of miniature sonatas for violin and piano, comprised of *Sonatini* and the *Violin Rascals 1 – 7*. The pieces in these books were arranged in collaboration with the Hungarian composer László Rossa, (born 1941). The *Sonatini* and the *Violin Rascals 1* are available in coloured notation, which allows for a smooth transition from *Violin ABC*. The music in *Violin Rascals 2-7* uses traditional notation.

The pieces use stylistic characteristics of traditional sonatas for violin and piano, such as alternating melodic and accompaniment roles for example. A single *Sonatini* or *Violin Rascals* piece uses several melodies and folk songs from the *Violin ABC* volumes, allowing for numerous changes of character, time and tempo within the same piece of music. The pieces are consequently longer and demand more concentration from the pupil compared to the *Violin ABC* songs, as Szilvay further instructs that the students must learn how to listen attentively and play cooperatively with the pianist:

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<sup>230</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Scales and Arpeggios for Children*, vol. 3, rev. ed. (Espoo: Fazer, 1991), 2.

When practising and performing these pieces, the child should not be satisfied with simply getting the rhythms right and preserving good intonation, but should also listen attentively, play with maximum concentration when his or her turn comes, retreat into the background when an accompanying role is called for, learn to control *accelerandi* and *ritardandi*, and play with feeling: in other words, *make music*.<sup>231</sup>

## Violin Duos

There are four volumes of violin duets: *Duettini* and *Violin Duos 1-3*. The materials were arranged in collaboration with László Rossa and designed for the pupil and teacher, (or another advanced pupil). *Duettini* is targeted for students in *Violin ABC Book A* and present the pieces in coloured notation and traditional notation. The *Violin Duos* use traditional notation and mainly use folk songs that were introduced in *Violin ABC*, however, students develop skills of ensemble playing. Szilvay's intention with these duos are for multiple-part reading and listening, as the pieces are presented as a score showing all parts and not just the students' part.<sup>232</sup>

*Violin Duos 1* uses only open strings for the student part, which Szilvay intends is for the training of the right-hand.<sup>233</sup> He suggests that while playing these duos the teacher should make subtle changes in the dynamics, tempo, colour or character for the pupil to respond to with their tone production.<sup>234</sup> Reading from the musical score, which shows all of the parts can aid this because the student can read the teacher's part simultaneously.

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<sup>231</sup> László Rossa, Geza and Csaba Szilvay, *Violin Rascals Cello Rascals 123: Piano Accompaniment Part* (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2008), 6.

<sup>232</sup> Géza Szilvay, László Rossa, *Colourstrings Violin Duos*, vol. 1. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2000), forematter.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Géza Szilvay, László Rossa, *Colourstrings Violin Duos*, vol. 1. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2000), forematter.

*Violin Duos 2* and *3* introduce more demanding material in both violin parts. Szilvay recommends that violin groups can perform the pieces, which also means that students can play the pieces without the teacher.<sup>235</sup> The pieces in *Duos 2* complement the *Yellow Pages* series, as some of the same folk materials and concepts of violin playing appear in both texts.<sup>236</sup> The same can be said with regards to *Duos 3* and *Violin ABC Book E and F*.<sup>237</sup>

### **String Chamber Music**

The string chamber music includes trios, quartet and quintet compositions inspired by folk songs. They are separated into two series: *Chamber Music for Young String Players* (three volumes), and *Colourful Music for Strings* (five volumes). Szilvay and Rossa arranged the materials in *Chamber Music for Young String Players*, while repertoire in *Colourful Music for Strings* was arranged with the Finnish composer Ilkka Kuusisto, (born 1933). Similar to the *Duos*, the sheet music is presented in score format allowing for global score reading by the students.

*Chamber Music for Young String Players* features pieces for beginner-level players through to students working on the material in *Book F* and can be played as a violin trio or with an ad libitum cello part. *Colourful Music for Strings* can be used with the *Violin ABC* series, where a beginner soloist is accompanied by a string orchestra.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>236</sup> Géza Szilvay, László Rossa, *Colourstrings Violin Duos*, vol. 2. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2000), 2.

<sup>237</sup> Géza Szilvay, László Rossa, *Colourstrings Violin Duos*, vol. 3. (Helsinki: Fennica Gehrman, 2000), 1.

<sup>238</sup> Voima, 26.

## 2.6 Conclusion of *Colourstrings* materials

The *Colourstrings* materials have been constructed in such way that any student can learn to play the violin. A musical pathway of three stages flows from infancy through to instrumental study in *Colourstrings*: Home, kindergarten and instrumental school. In the journey through the *Colourstrings* materials, the student develops a solid understanding of musical literacy, reading skills, listening skills, violin technique and uses a catalogue of children's songs and folk songs as an aid to model musical character, either by singing or playing. The tools obtained from *Colourstrings* training provide the student with accessibility to numerous amounts of music because all of the fundamental concepts of learning how to play the violin are presented step by step through adopting Kodály's philosophy. Aural training, singing, theory, instrumental solo and chamber activities are inter-connected learning experiences in *Colourstrings*, suggesting that students need a variety of activities in their instrumental study rather than just private lessons.

As shown in Figure 1, if there were a *Volume G* published it would be targeted at 'change of positions.' This brings to question if there is going to be a '*Book G*' published in the future, how it addresses change of positions and how Szilvay might intend the topic is to be taught.

## Chapter 3

### Observations of Géza Szilvay, Teachers and Students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute

The behaviour and characteristics of Géza Szilvay, violin teachers and students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute are discussed in this chapter. Opinions were formed from recorded observations made in 2011 when visiting the Institute, and also from my experiences as an active participant at *Colourstrings* teacher training courses from 2011 to 2015. The observations recorded by researchers who visited the Institute has also contributed to this research, as do Géza Szilvay's comments about teaching. The aim of this chapter is to give insight into *Colourstrings* training as it is effectively implemented at the Institute with the intention of providing useful ideas for teachers.

While several researchers have visited the East-Helsinki Music Institute, there is very little written about the program, the teachers or the students. The majority of observations documented by researchers were of Géza Szilvay teaching and conducting. Brief observations were made by the same researchers about the environment at the institute and student string ensembles, in particular the quality of the *Helsinki Strings*.

Szilvay's teaching is best gleaned through live observation. At the time of Mitchell's research, this was the only way to understand the application of teaching *Colourstrings*.<sup>239</sup> This underlines the importance of the teacher training courses, rather

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<sup>239</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 60.



than just reviewing the method books, to gain proper understanding, for video footage of Géza Szilvay and the program at the East-Helsinki Music Institute has only recently been made available. Analysis of these videos form part of this project, which gave assurance that the characteristics and quality of music making that I observed several years ago was not an unusual occurrence, rather something that has remained a constant. The videos of particular relevance include examples from the *International Minifiddlers* distance-learning project featuring Géza Szilvay teaching young violin students,<sup>240</sup> and a demonstration video of the East-Helsinki Music Institute.<sup>241</sup>

### 3.1 The East-Helsinki Music Institute

#### Background

The East-Helsinki Music Institute was founded in 1965 and is part of the Porolahti Elementary School in East Helsinki.<sup>242</sup> The school is entirely state funded and provides, free of charge, basic music education, including group instrumental lessons and chamber music tutorials for all students from grades one to nine with a focus on classical music.<sup>243</sup>

The Institute provides solo instrumental lessons for strings, woodwind, brass, piano, cembalo, vocal and kantele (Finnish folk harp).<sup>244</sup> Students in the Institute can be taken from all over Helsinki including classes for parents, university students and

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<sup>240</sup> “Home,” *International Minifiddlers*, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://sarestoakatemia.org/minifiddlers/>.

<sup>241</sup> “Music Program at the East Helsinki Music Institute,” *YouTube* (December 19, 2016), accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7M2s0343Dxc&t=6s>.

<sup>242</sup> “Etusivu,” *The East-Helsinki Music Institute*, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.ihmo.fi>.

<sup>243</sup> Parents pay a weekly tuition fee for individual lessons at the Institute.

<sup>244</sup> “Etusivu,” Itä-Helsingin musiikki opisto persus koulu, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.ihmu.fi/etusivu/ihmu>.

high-school students.<sup>245</sup> The teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute believe that an interest in music by both child and family is an essential factor for a child to succeed in learning music.<sup>246</sup> This is demonstrated by the classes for the 3-6 month age group, which target the parents' involvement and help generate a musical environment for the child. Pretto described these classes as "extremely crucial; they help generate the rhythm and the gross sense of pitch concepts in their child."<sup>247</sup> A high quantity and variety of music classes inevitably means that the school environment is constantly active with the sounds of music.

### **The Violin Programme**

The violin programme at the East-Helsinki Music Institute offers active and varied musical experiences every day, echoing Kodály's ideas for effective musical training: "A musical experience as varied as possible is indispensable; without playing chamber music and singing in choirs, nobody can become a good musician"<sup>248</sup> Consequently, the violin programme complements the variety of *Colourstrings* materials, by having the students learn and play solo pieces, violin duets and string chamber music.<sup>249</sup> There are twelve violin teachers active at the Institute, all of whom perform several duties including private lessons, group lessons, sectional tutorials, and either observing or conducting the string orchestra.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> "Etusivu," Itä-Helsingin musiikki opisto persus koulu, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.ihmu.fi/etusivu/ihmu>.

<sup>247</sup> Pretto, 8.

<sup>248</sup> "Kodály Concept," Kodály Institute of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, accessed 10 May 2016, [www.kodaly.hu/zoltan\\_kodaly/kodaly\\_concept](http://www.kodaly.hu/zoltan_kodaly/kodaly_concept).

<sup>249</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

<sup>250</sup> "Musiikinopiskelu," The East Helsinki Music Institute, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.ihmo.fi/musiikinopiskelu/opettajat/#viulu>.

The weekly timetable for the students at the Institute in 2009 included one private lesson for forty-five minutes, four group lessons for fifty minutes, four musicianship classes and one orchestral class.<sup>251</sup> In 2017, the number of lessons has changed to three weekly group lessons, two musicianship classes, choir, and two to four orchestra and chamber music sessions depending on the year of study.<sup>252</sup> Although the number of lessons or length of lessons may have changed over the years, Szilvay has upheld a consistency in the student schedule as one that provides private lessons, group lessons (which develop over time to string chamber music tutorials), and orchestra each week for up to ten years of schooling.<sup>253</sup>

### **3.2 Géza Szilvay**

Géza Szilvay is one of the great violin teachers of the modern era, acknowledged not only for his contribution to violin pedagogy but also for his success rate with students. It has been recognised that fifty-nine of his first sixty-eight beginner students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute went onto become professional violinists,<sup>254</sup> while Banney noted that hardly any of Szilvay's students will quit studying the violin.<sup>255</sup>

#### **Nurturing and Friendly Behaviour**

A noteworthy characteristic of Géza Szilvay's general behaviour is his friendliness and respect towards everyone. In the few meetings that we have had over the years, he has always made me feel important and that my journey as a violin teacher is one of

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<sup>251</sup> Pretto, 13.

<sup>252</sup> "Musiikinopiskelu," The East Helsinki Music Institute, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.ihmo.fi/musiikinopiskelu/opettajat/#viulu>.

<sup>253</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 45.

<sup>254</sup> Colourstrings Australia, [colourstrings.com.au](http://colourstrings.com.au)

<sup>255</sup> Banney, 1.

great value. The same can be said about his students, other teachers and their students because he gives each of them his full attention, is equally generous to all and either warmly shakes hands or embraces them with a big smile on his face. Szilvay's behaviour is infectious, affecting all those around him; nobody feels isolated and everyone seems happy.

Pretto described Szilvay's behaviour while teaching as "nurturing and catering to every student's needs and bringing out the best in each individual child."<sup>256</sup> This made a profound impression on Pretto as she described Szilvay's teaching as both "impressive" and "breathtaking" when observing him interact with the children, nurturing their progress. At the same time, she noted that the children all adored him.<sup>257</sup> A connection could be made to Suzuki's philosophy in that nurturing the students is valued,<sup>258</sup> however Szilvay has argued that Suzuki did not greatly influence him.<sup>259</sup>

It could be said that Szilvay's friendliness and caring behaviour is related to his Hungarian upbringing, where to touch hands, arms, and shoulders is considered a normal greeting custom.<sup>260</sup> Szilvay regards touch as a necessary tool for teaching the violin and that physical assistance was normal for Hungarian teachers in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>261</sup> Perhaps his noticeable friendliness and caring behaviour had a pervasive effect on the whole East-Helsinki Music Institute because Finnish people are often

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<sup>256</sup> Pretto, 13.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>258</sup> Shinichi Suzuki, *Suzuki Violin School Vol.1 Violin Part*, Rev. Ed., (USA: Summy-Birchard, 2007), 4.

<sup>259</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 35.

<sup>260</sup> "Hungary," Countries and Their Cultures, (Advameg Inc: 2017), accessed January 22, 2017, [www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Hungary.html](http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Hungary.html).

<sup>261</sup> Banney, 1.

perceived as being shy.<sup>262</sup> Szilvay's relationship with students is not strictly just as a violin teacher but also as a friend and mentor. He was observed interacting with students at lunch breaks and having conversations with them over meals without isolating anyone.<sup>263</sup> He describes his own behaviour towards students as having "a feeling of parental responsibility;"<sup>264</sup> for Szilvay, the care and responsibility he feels towards his own child is transferred to his pupils:

The excitement of the expecting and waiting for the child, the love towards the coming child, and the naturally developing parental and pedagogical responsibility towards the baby is transformed toward the 60 Finnish children as well.<sup>265</sup>

It has not been made explicit the effect Szilvay's behaviour has had on the school environment at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, however the example of him constantly demonstrating friendly and caring behaviour towards everyone has made a positive contribution to his students' behaviour. Furthermore, the fact that the students are frequently playing music together could be construed as a contributing factor to the friendly school environment. Children making music together is viewed by Szilvay as being not only an important musical influence but also a social and emotional one.<sup>266</sup> Research has supported Szilvay's view because students who feel a sense of belonging and have many wide-ranging friendships with their peers at school has been linked directly with subsequent engagement and higher achievement.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Loughnan, 33.

<sup>263</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 39-40.

<sup>264</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 141.

<sup>265</sup> Szilvay, "Colourstrings," 56.

<sup>266</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 60.

<sup>267</sup> Hattie et al., 87.

## Teaching and Conducting

I observed Szilvay's caring behaviour towards everyone in 2011 as a constant feature of his conducting style, and notably in orchestra rehearsals. Every member was treated professionally and made to feel significant, with good intonation being an important task for every player.<sup>268</sup> As the conductor, Szilvay would frequently question each section of the orchestra with regard to what other sections are playing at any given time, and he would also ask individual players sitting at the back desks to play as a quartet, not only to make them feel important but also to give them the chance to hear themselves more easily.<sup>269</sup>

Examples of Szilvay's conducting techniques were also demonstrated at the teacher training courses. An important task that he set for all players of the ensemble was to be able to see properly: the conductor, the music and fellow players "in the one look."<sup>270</sup> Looking down at the music and then up at the conductor was not acceptable, having his students see properly required some of his players to reposition themselves and the height of their music stand. Visual exercises and games were used to test the players at this skill. For example, Szilvay conducted the orchestra playing a scale alternating between soloists and the whole ensemble, which he indicated to the players using visual cues throughout the progression of the scale.<sup>271</sup>

Szilvay directed the group classes in a similar way to conducting the orchestra, by using dynamic body language and hand gestures. The body language was constant, indicating that Szilvay was demanding from the student throughout the whole lesson.

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<sup>268</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 61.

<sup>269</sup> Pretto, 17-20.

<sup>270</sup> "Géza Szilvay in Australia 1/3," *YouTube* (January 13, 2011), accessed May 9, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMLUEAoToq8>.

<sup>271</sup> Géza Szilvay, "The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello" (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 1, 2011).

These visual movements helped get an immediate reaction from the children, in particular how they should use the bow and how they would shape musical gestures.<sup>272</sup> He used the same technique in private lessons and there also appears to be a shaking of his hands to indicate more ‘vibrato’ from the pupils in the video demonstrations.<sup>273</sup>

While Szilvay shows such a friendly behaviour towards his students, at the same time he demands from them quality and hard work from the very beginning of their violin study. According to Mitchell, Szilvay’s students gained international recognition due to the quality of their playing, both musically and technically.<sup>274</sup> Szilvay reaffirmed his desire for quality playing in his opening address at a teacher-training course, as he frequently instructed prospective *Colourstrings* teachers to “demand quality from the children.”<sup>275</sup> This was also evidenced in teaching demonstrations for Szilvay constantly used body language to encourage pupils in ways to phrase the music, search for a ringing sound, correct tuning, and when necessary he moved the pupil’s elbows and head position gently to improve posture.<sup>276</sup>

Szilvay’s teaching caters to the needs of his student, rather than the needs of the music or the violin. He uses the student’s individual perception to help gain an understanding of musical elements and find joy in the learning activity. This may suggest that each student receives different treatment however; there are common

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<sup>272</sup> Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study,” 60.

<sup>273</sup> International Minifiddlers, “Story of the Colourstrings method and International Minifiddlers” (video), May 8, 2015, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qb-ufWDqB3c>.

<sup>274</sup> Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study,” 2.

<sup>275</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

<sup>276</sup> Géza Szilvay, “Australian Colourstrings Festival: Teacher’s Workshop” (lecture, Fairholme College, Toowoomba, July 6, 2014).

methods that Szilvay employs when he teaches each student. From interviewing his students Loughnan established that the cornerstones of Szilvay's approach are creativity and the student's imagination, which lead his students towards discovering a love for music in addition to enriching their personalities.<sup>277</sup> The evidence from Loughnan's study suggests that Szilvay approaches issues of violin playing from the student's perspective, rather than commanding his own ways for them to solve issues.

### **Teaching Through Touch**

Szilvay frequently uses physical contact to help guide the posture and movements of his pupils. The physical contact Szilvay uses in his teaching is to assist movements and mould an ergonomically sound posture.<sup>278</sup> Many violin teachers use physical contact in order to teach the instrument well, however, there is no specific manual or guide as to how to use physical contact to teach the violin. A recent study into the role of touch by string teachers shows why physical contact is a valuable teaching tool and referred to Szilvay as a "superb model."<sup>279</sup>

Banney established that the physical assistance Szilvay employs in his teaching is used to encourage pupils to develop routine motor processes; what he describes as "unconscious teaching."<sup>280</sup> At a later stage, the processes are brought to a conscious level and reinforced until the technique becomes subconscious.<sup>281</sup> Szilvay carefully guides movements in the initial stages because the motor cortex does not distinguish

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<sup>277</sup> Loughnan, 41 – 42.

<sup>278</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 5.

<sup>279</sup> Banney, 1.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.



between good and bad violin technique. As Banney states: “Habits established on the violin are simply those motor sequences that have been practiced most often.”<sup>282</sup>

It should be noted that although physical assistance can be used to help teach the movements of violin playing, the movements themselves must begin with a musical idea or context. Otherwise, the movements are entirely generated from an external thinking source, (the teacher), which does not connect musical purpose for the pupil. Szilvay’s design of *Colourstrings* also supports this theory in the way the learning process begins with listening, clapping and singing before the instrumental playing.<sup>283</sup>

Kempter describes that the acquisition of a skill is generated by an idea, which is transmitted to commands, which drives the muscles.<sup>284</sup> Kempter and Banney draw the same conclusion that once the muscles move in repetitive patterns, they begin to feel comfortable and gradually become an automated skill. In *Colourstrings*, after several repetitions of guided movement, Szilvay gradually lets the student take on the skill individually.<sup>285</sup> Kempter does not say directly to guide the students’ movement, however it is implicit in her belief that the initial external actions of violin playing are malleable and therefore need to be treated carefully by the violinist or violin teacher,<sup>286</sup> and furthermore that muscles do not make autonomous decisions about the best way to move.<sup>287</sup>

Teaching through touch in order to help generate the desired automated movements may also suggest that using vision to learn bow-strokes is a flawed concept, yet many

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 34-35.

<sup>284</sup> Kempter, 80.

<sup>285</sup> Géza Szilvay, “Australian Colourstrings Festival: Teacher’s Workshop” (lecture, Fairholme College, Toowoomba, July 8, 2014).

<sup>286</sup> Kempter, 70.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 80.

teachers tell their students to ‘watch the bow’ in order to keep it straight or be at a specific area of the bow for example. In Szilvay’s teaching, these technical demands are learnt through physical awareness rather than sight.

### **Themes and Links with Great Teachers**

The observations made of Szilvay identified several themes that are similar to those of some of the most renowned violin teachers of the past, such as Leopold Auer (1845 – 1930), Ivan Galamian (1903 – 1981), and Carl Flesch (1873 – 1944). Although these teachers were not known for teaching young beginners, the common themes connecting them with Szilvay include demand for quality, approaching issues from the student’s perspective and a nurturing, mentor-like behaviour.

In an interview with Martens, Auer insisted on demanding as much as possible from students because otherwise one would not know of what the student is potentially capable.<sup>288</sup> Adding to this, many of Auer’s students were world famous soloists recognised for their individuality, in particular with regards to tone production and musical interpretation. Rodrigue’s study of Auer’s students and their recordings concludes that Auer’s success as a teacher was marked by his inspiration for individual interpretation.<sup>289</sup>

Similar to Auer, Galamian’s philosophy towards teaching was that it must be individualised to the personality, physicality and mentality of each student based on

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<sup>288</sup> Frederick H. Martens, *Violin Mastery* (New York: Dover, 2006), 16.

<sup>289</sup> Ruth Elizabeth Rodrigues, “Selected Students of Leopold Auer: a study in violin performance-practice” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2009), 234 and 377, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/739>.

guiding principles.<sup>290</sup> Arney determined that Galamian's consistent and demanding teaching style was adapted to the abilities of each student.<sup>291</sup> This approach suggests that Galamian was not a rigid teacher, but open to new ideas and change. Mitchell acknowledged that Szilvay's ideas were "not static,"<sup>292</sup> and in addition to this, Kodály's approach towards teaching is that one must constantly be evolving ideas, strategies and methods whilst being open to change.<sup>293</sup>

Flesch's students remember him as a personally involved, caring and nurturing teacher.<sup>294</sup> This suggests that he adopted an embracing, mentor-like behaviour towards his students. Even though Szilvay has not been documented for mentioning the teaching styles of Galamian or Flesch, the style of Szilvay's teaching and the philosophies underpinning *Colourstrings* can be likened to them.

Auer,<sup>295</sup> Flesch,<sup>296</sup> and Galamian,<sup>297</sup> share a common, general goal that teaching should lead the student to become self-sufficient. Szilvay shares the same objective; for Kodály's philosophy towards teaching is that it must guide the student towards direct intuition.<sup>298</sup> The frequent inner-hearing activity in *Colourstrings* training for example, is a self-intuitive exercise.

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<sup>290</sup> Ivan Galamian, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Ann Arbor: Shar, 1985), 1.

<sup>291</sup> Kelly Arney, "A Comparison of Auer, Flesch, Galamian" (master's thesis, University of Texas, 2006), 39.

<sup>292</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 48.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>294</sup> Carl Flesch, *The Art of Violin Playing*, Book 1, ed. and trans. Eric Rosenblith (New York: Carl Fischer, 2000), vii.

<sup>295</sup> Leopold Auer, *Violin Playing As I Teach It* (New York: Dover, 1980), 224-225.

<sup>296</sup> Flesch, v.

<sup>297</sup> Galamian, 8.

<sup>298</sup> Zoltán Kodály, *The Selected Writings*, trans. Eric Bónis (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1974), 120.

### 3.3 Teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute

The violin teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute have had limited acknowledgment in research about *Colourstrings*, yet they are key exponents of Szilvay's work. Most of the teachers are ex-students of Szilvay, taught through *Colourstrings* and have progressed to professional careers as teachers.

Bunting made a brief observation that their lesson styles were traditional, repertoire-led where the teacher plays along.<sup>299</sup> This however needs clarification because I observed the teachers never played in unison, which is something which Szilvay discourages: "do not play in unison with the child because it takes attention away from their sound."<sup>300</sup> There were frequent times when the teacher would play an accompaniment part along with the student using the piano score.<sup>301</sup> This helped teach the music more comprehensively to the student rather than just their individual part, and also had the added benefit of preparing them if they were to play with an accompanying pianist. Understanding the music comprehensively, was an important part of the violin lesson.

#### **Influence of Géza Szilvay**

The violin teachers that I observed at the East-Helsinki Music Institute demonstrated characteristics similar to Géza Szilvay. This may be because many of them were formerly his students and his behaviour had been passed on to them as a model. It was noticeable that they showed the same nurturing qualities of demeanour that Szilvay

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<sup>299</sup> Bunting, 14.

<sup>300</sup> Géza Szilvay, "The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello" (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

<sup>301</sup> Observations made by author, East-Helsinki Music Institute, November 22, 2011.

did; however, each had their own individual ideas when it came to particular facets of violin playing and music. Like the methodology of the *Colourstrings* books, where neither what to do nor how to do it is explained explicitly, it is up to each teacher to find their own way as suits both the pupil and themselves. One of the teachers considered this as a positive feature of *Colourstrings*,<sup>302</sup> as also of Kodaly's approach. Furthermore, a study of a particular violin teacher's journey with *Colourstrings* made very clear that the books require a deep understanding of the materials through which the teacher's personal ideas are filtered.<sup>303</sup>

### **Collaboration and Equality**

The most immediate and striking characteristic of the violin teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute was their complete dedication to teaching and their equal commitment to their students. This was manifest in the long and frequent periods spent collaborating, discussing students and asking each other for advice. Bunting acknowledged that the teachers work as a team and that pupils are not just the product of one teacher.<sup>304</sup> Studies have shown that teacher collaboration is intrinsic to a successful school environment and higher student achievements.<sup>305</sup> It is therefore possible to conclude that the continued success of the East-Helsinki Music Institute is partly due to this collaboration between teachers.

This leads on to my next observation made in 2011 - that the teachers not only treat everyone respectfully, but also equally. Many teachers are equally involved in the string orchestra rehearsals at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, rather than just a

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<sup>302</sup> Homfray, 81.

<sup>303</sup> Viksten, 15.

<sup>304</sup> Bunting, 15.

<sup>305</sup> Hattie et al., 191.

conductor in charge. Before a rehearsal commenced, the teachers (including the conductor) would discuss the tasks for the upcoming rehearsal, almost certainly to identify together common goals for that session.

Typically, at the Institute, a string orchestra rehearsal was divided into two parts: sectional and tutti. The division gave the teachers the opportunity to work first with a section of the orchestra and prepare them for the full ensemble rehearsal. In the full ensemble rehearsal, all of the teachers would stand behind and in amongst the students in the orchestra, to assist with markings, correct postures and make suggestions throughout the rehearsal. Added to this, teachers made suggestions to the conductor in front of the students, which almost certainly demonstrated to the students that no one is more important than another. A study into the qualities of Finnish education shows why equality and cooperation are important in student achievement.<sup>306</sup>

### **Growth Mindset**

A key characteristic of the teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute is that they demonstrate a ‘growth mindset’ approach: a recognition that skills, knowledge and talent come from effort and are products of work.<sup>307</sup> In a growth mindset approach, one believes that his or her abilities are not genetically preset because the neurons in our brains can continually make fresh connections and therefore make changes. For musicians, Marsalis claimed that individuals who employ growth mindset enjoy challenges, seek advice and criticism, regard errors as instructive, employ diverse

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<sup>306</sup> Jukka Sarjala, “Equality and Cooperation. Finland’s Path to Excellence,” *American Educator* (Spring 2013), 32, accessed December 9, 2016: [www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Sarjala.pdf](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Sarjala.pdf).

<sup>307</sup> Carol Dweck, *Mindset*, rev. ed. 2017 (Great Britain: Robinson, 2017), 15, PDF eBook.

learning strategies, draw inspiration from the successes of others, bounce back from disappointments and are undaunted - even motivated - by setbacks.<sup>308</sup>

The application of this approach demonstrates that it can be important for effective violin teaching. Cooperation and collaboration are key contributors to growth mindset approach, as they encourage an open attitude towards advice, criticism and change.<sup>309</sup>

It was not only the high quality of instruction shown by teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute but also their motivation for learning.<sup>310</sup> I observed teachers were constantly learning new repertoire and exercises to pass on to students, as well as self-analysing, seeking advice and experimenting with new ideas. The teachers were subsequently active researchers, and in some cases, contributors of research in pedagogy. This may be because they were willing to improve their ability to cater for more individual needs of students. Two examples of growth mindset employed by the teachers will be discussed, and furthermore showed links with Kodály's philosophy.

One school day in 2011 at the Institute, one of the teachers admitted that they were struggling with a particular male student because he was not keeping up with the pace of the rest of the class, which included four other girls. The teacher had many discussions with colleagues about this and as a result, referred the young male student to another violin teacher. Just over two years after this observation was made, the same teacher made a presentation about the differences between teaching boys and teaching girls at a teacher-training course.<sup>311</sup> What emerged from this presentation

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<sup>308</sup> Gerald Klickstein, "The Growth Mindset," MusiciansWay.com, July 25, 2010, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://musiciansway.com/blog/2010/07/the-growth-mindset>.

<sup>309</sup> Dweck, 15.

<sup>310</sup> Observations made by author, East-Helsinki Music Institute, August - December, 2011.

<sup>311</sup> Colourstrings Teacher Training Team, "How Learning Functions Best" (lecture, Jugendgästehaus, Klagenfurt, January 4, 2014).

was that the teacher discovered some worrying statistics about boys' learning abilities,<sup>312</sup> and so had worked to implement effective strategies into her teaching when teaching boys, such as using less verbal instruction and more action.<sup>313</sup>

The teacher demonstrated growth mindset because she identified a shortcoming in her teaching; sought advice, relevant research, and shared the experiences with other teachers. An alternative view, or perhaps a fixed mindset approach would have seen a different scenario where the teacher may have blamed the student instead. Like the teachers at the Kodály Institute, those at the East-Helsinki Music Institute also employed a growth mindset for Williams observed that the Kodály Institute teachers did not blame their students, instead they reflected on their teaching and sought ways to change their methods to effect positive results for their students.<sup>314</sup>

A posture workshop held at the East-Helsinki Music Institute was a clear demonstration of the power in maintaining a growth mindset.<sup>315</sup> At this workshop, several of the Institute's violin teachers, along with a violin professor from the Sibelius Academy and a professor of physiology examined the students' postures. The teachers collaboratively analysed the students and experimented with various combinations of shoulder supports and chinrests to find what may be best suited to each student. There were approximately twenty adults and five to ten children in the room at one time, with the adults sharing their feedback. In one particular case, where the student had quite a long neck and sloping shoulders, it took approximately forty-

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<sup>312</sup> For example: "Boys in general pick up less of what is aurally going on around them, especially when it is said in words, and need more sensory-tactile experience than girls in order for their brains to light up learning."

<sup>313</sup> Colourstrings Teacher Training Team, "How Learning Functions Best" (lecture, Jugendgästehaus, Klagenfurt, January 4, 2014).

<sup>314</sup> Williams, 1.

<sup>315</sup> Observations made by author, East-Helsinki Music Institute, October 22, 2011.



five minutes before the teachers could agree on a solution for her. It seemed like the teachers could not do enough for the students and further demonstrated Kodály's philosophy: "only the best is good enough."<sup>316</sup>

### **3.4 Violin Students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute**

The violin students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute all have fine intonation, a developed musical intellect and good ensemble skills. Pretto<sup>317</sup> and Homfray<sup>318</sup> for example, agreed that the students in the Helsinki Strings, the Institute's highest-level string ensemble, comprising children from age 10 to 18 years, demonstrated technical brilliance and musical flair, while Mitchell<sup>319</sup> and Bunting<sup>320</sup> agreed that the ensembles' rhythm and tuning were tightly together. No researcher has specified technical characteristics in individual lessons however I observed that the same qualities were evident in this setting.<sup>321</sup>

#### **Relaxed Technique**

A technical characteristic of all of the violin students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute that I observed was that they played the instrument without stiffness, in particular with very free and light hands. In the previous chapter this was noted as a part of *Colourstrings* methodology, because the first tutor books extensively use harmonics to teach longitudinal movements on the fingerboard and encourage

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<sup>316</sup> Kodály, *Selected Writings*, 148.

<sup>317</sup> Pretto, 9.

<sup>318</sup> Homfray, 78.

<sup>319</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 70-71.

<sup>320</sup> Bunting, 14.

<sup>321</sup> Observations made by author, East-Helsinki Music Institute, August – December, 2011.

looseness.<sup>322</sup> Bunting observed that all of the students played with a “big full sound demonstrating feeling and fluency,”<sup>323</sup> suggesting that the students were physically free and relaxed.

The relaxed nature of the student’s technique appeared to reflect their individual emotions. Bunting agreed that the students appeared quite calm and naturally well disciplined.<sup>324</sup> It is unclear exactly why this is so but it may very well be due to the way *Colourstrings* is designed, intended as does, to suit the needs of the individual pupil rather than the music or the instrument.<sup>325</sup> Pretto wrote that the “most attractive feature of *Colourstrings* is the idea of nurturing the individual child emotionally.”<sup>326</sup> One can argue that calmness and discipline may have something to do with the general nature of the Finnish culture; that notwithstanding, it was in itself noticeable that the violin teachers at the Institute achieved relaxation and concentration from the students relatively easily. Considering these observations, the students’ minimal tension and calmness almost certainly enhanced their rhythmic skill and ability to achieve ensemble cohesion.

While it was observed that the students were calm and well disciplined, they also appeared to be very joyous children. I noticed that the students would run to their violin class as if it was a race, all the while laughing and smiling. They unpacked their violins enthusiastically and prepared the room before the teacher had arrived for the lesson. On one occasion they all surprised the teacher as she entered because it was

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<sup>322</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 18-19.

<sup>323</sup> Bunting, 14.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

<sup>326</sup> Pretto, 13.

her birthday. Pretto agreed that the children were very joyful and that it shone through their playing: they played very “entertainingly and with artistic flair.”<sup>327</sup>

### **Play Lightly and With the Ears**

Light hands may contribute to a unified ensemble sound. Mitchell<sup>328</sup> and Bunting<sup>329</sup> observed the strong united sound of the students however did not mention that they played their instruments with lightness in the use of their hands. Szilvay, however, mentioned that light hands are a technical characteristic of violin students trained through *Colourstrings* for the reason that minimal force should be applied in the production of sounds.<sup>330</sup> Kodály teachers demonstrated a similar approach with regards to singing; they encourage student groups and choirs to sing lightly, not to push or force the sound, and so ensure the performers listened conscientiously and more carefully while singing. “Sing with your ears”<sup>331</sup> is what these teachers demand to reach their goal of a unified and quality sound. The same principle can be applied to Szilvay’s instruction of playing with lightness in the hands. It may not be the reason, or only reason, why the *Helsinki Strings* plays with such a unified sound, however Bunting observed group lessons at the East-Helsinki Music Institute where students played “with mutual awareness.”<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Pretto, 12.

<sup>328</sup> Mitchell, “A Qualitative Study,” 70.

<sup>329</sup> Bunting, 14.

<sup>330</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

<sup>331</sup> Susan Searle and Julia Piggin, “Kodály Method in Practice” (lecture, Museum of Old and New Art - MONA, August 25, 2016).

<sup>332</sup> Bunting, 14.

### 3.5 Further Observations

The teachers at the Institute were observed using materials outside of *Colourstrings* for etudes, concerti and ensemble music. The observations were made mostly in the group classes and ensemble rehearsals, and few were made in private lessons with students who were up to, and beyond, *Book E*. The materials differed with each teacher, suggesting that there was no order or method employed. The commonly used materials are discussed.

#### **Music of Béla Bartók**

Outside of the *Colourstrings* materials, the students at the Insitute studied the music of Béla Bartók during and after their training through *Colourstrings*.<sup>333</sup> Studying Bartók's music is a tradition also employed by the Kodály Institute, which according to the Institute should be "a fluent process from the children song arrangements through Microcosmos pieces, to the great orchestral compositions, step by step, we (teachers) make the pupils discover and reproduce all the stylistic characteristics of Bela Bartok's music."<sup>334</sup> In the group classes for violin students at the East-Helsinki Music Institute, students were studying pieces from Bartók's *44 Violin Duos*. Inside these short pieces, the stylistic characteristics of folksongs are combined with musical forms and harmonic ideas from many different periods of music. From observation of the children with these pieces they seemed to play them with great joy, enthusiasm and their body language showed that they could feel dancing gestures in the music. Almost certainly the stylistic characteristics of Bartok's music chosen for these lessons encouraged joy in and enthusiasm for music. The music of Bartók was also

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<sup>333</sup> Observations made by author, East-Helsinki Music Institute, September 20, 2011.

<sup>334</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

enjoyed by the string orchestras at the Institute. It was observed that the junior string orchestra played short pieces from Bartók's *Songs for Children* and the intermediate string orchestra played the *Romanian Folk Dances*.<sup>335</sup> Furthermore there are recordings of the *Helsinki Strings* playing the *Divertimento*.<sup>336</sup>

### **Teacher Training Courses**

The teacher training courses for *Colourstrings* operate in three stages leading towards a *Colourstrings Teachers Certificate*. The courses run as intensive sessions covering the *Colourstrings* material, as well as workshops in instrumental teaching, solmisation and ensemble playing. The courses are divided into specific instrument groups for violin, viola and cello, and are directed by a team of teachers from the East-Helsinki Music Institute, the Szilvay brothers and a Kodály specialist. Each stage varies in content, as the first stage is introductory to the materials and Kodály methodology while the remaining stages target specific materials, technical guidance, supervised teaching and conducting.<sup>337</sup>

A key factor of the first stage course was that it was not intended to turn participants into *Colourstrings* teachers, but for Szilvay to share his work and experiences over his career. He made this clear in his opening address that his experiences of teaching hundreds of children who are now professional violinists give him the confidence to deliver teacher training.<sup>338</sup> Some of the participants were very experienced teachers familiar with different, albeit positive, teaching methods and approaches, and Szilvay

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<sup>335</sup> Observations made by author, East-Helsinki Music Institute, September 21, 2011.

<sup>336</sup> Béla Bartók, *Divertimento Sz 113, Contrasts*, the Helsinki Strings conducted by Csaba and Géza Szilvay, recorded 1993, Finlandia Records 0630-13170-2, 1996, CD.

<sup>337</sup> "The Training," *Colourstrings*, accessed December 9, 2016, <http://colourstrings.fi/the-training-2>.

<sup>338</sup> Géza Szilvay, "The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello" (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

was interested in their opinions and willing to know if they had doubts with *Colourstrings*.<sup>339</sup> His openness to hearing and sharing experiences created a relaxed, yet positive atmosphere among the teachers, as they were all engaged and willing to question Szilvay throughout the course.

Kodály-based musicianship classes operated daily at the first-stage course. This was to familiarise participants with the Kodály approach and how to incorporate musicianship training in string teaching and also potentially teach general musicianship. Szilvay was aware that giving musicianship classes might be difficult for violin teachers: he implied that collaborating with piano teachers helps by saying “good theory teachers are often pianists.”<sup>340</sup> Without adding any reasons to his comment, it may be due to the fact that general elements of music theory are more closely linked to the piano than the violin.

Physical guidance is an important ingredient of Szilvay’s teaching and consequently a key topic at the teacher training courses. Szilvay demonstrated his teaching in two ways at these courses: with a young student and with a trainee teacher participating in the course. This meant that trainee teachers could experience directly what Szilvay was trying to communicate through touch.<sup>341</sup> For example, weight distribution of the fingers and the pronation and supination<sup>342</sup> of the hand is felt through Szilvay’s guidance of the bow-hold. His right and left hands alternated doing this, while the free hand held the responsibility of guiding other movements or pointing at the music.

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<sup>339</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

<sup>340</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 3, 2011).

<sup>341</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

<sup>342</sup> Galamian, 50.

When using his right hand to guide the bow-hold, the left hand alternated between supporting the students' right elbow and giving rhythmic impulses to the upper-right arm. The intentions were to demonstrate the level of the right arm in relation to which string the bow is in contact with, and for the student to feel rhythmic gestures in the bowing arm.<sup>343</sup>

The second stage of the course had fewer participants than the first stage, allowing the training to be more personal and intensive. Teachers from around the world gathered and shared their experiences and issues with using *Colourstrings* over a period of approximately two years. These issues formed topics for discussion as the class worked through the first few books and sonata repertoire in *Colourstrings*.<sup>344</sup> Viksten, who was also one of the supervising tutors, noted that using *Colourstrings* material brought many topics of violin playing up for question, which encouraged teachers at the courses to share their views and present new ideas.<sup>345</sup> As a teacher trainer, Viksten is excited about this 'aim' of *Colourstrings* in the way that the material filters "every teacher's personality through it."<sup>346</sup> The courses demonstrated that the delivery of the *Colourstrings* material depends on the teacher, who in turn can potentially change or alter opinions over time.

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<sup>343</sup> Géza Szilvay, "The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello" (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, July 31, 2011).

<sup>344</sup> Observations made by author, "Phase 2A of the Colourstrings Certification" (workshop, Jugendgästehaus, Klagenfurt, January 2, 2014).

<sup>345</sup> Viksten, 15.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 4

### Interviews with Géza Szilvay and *Colourstrings* Teachers

Following the review of the *Colourstrings* books, Szilvay's writings and research made about the East-Helsinki Music Institute, interviews were used in this project in order to explore the experiences and perspectives of Géza Szilvay and other *Colourstrings* violin teachers. The philosophies, methodologies and materials employed by Géza Szilvay and *Colourstrings* teachers were explored in the interviews and the participants were also invited to give general comments or advice about *Colourstrings* and violin teaching.

Szilvay requested that his interview was via Skype, conducted on May 10, 2016. Interviews with the *Colourstrings* teachers were conducted through an exchange of emails with each, from June to October 2016. Szilvay's ideas and responses are identified in this research, while the East-Helsinki Music Institute teachers (EHMI:1 and EHMI:2) and the Australian teacher (A:1) remain unspecified.

In his *Handbook* Szilvay suggested that teachers should consider the following questions when teaching children: "What shall I teach? How shall I teach? Why do I teach?"<sup>347</sup> These broad questions were used as categories for my specific questions in relation to violin teaching beyond *Colourstrings*. The categories used to structure the questions in the interviews were identified to the participants as philosophy (why), methodology (how) and materials (what). Several themes emerged from the participants' discussions of each category, which will be used as subheadings in this

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<sup>347</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (1977), 3.



chapter. All interviews primarily followed a set of predetermined questions, (see Appendix A).

#### **4.1 The Participants**

At the time of this research I was able to interview the most direct and primary source to *Colourstrings*: its founder and creator, Géza Szilvay. In relation to violin teaching through and beyond *Colourstrings*, secondary to Szilvay are his colleagues at the East-Helsinki Music Institute. Two violin teachers currently working at the Institute were interviewed and one certified *Colourstrings* violin teacher who currently teaches in Australia were also interviewed. The Australian participant is one of a small pool of certified violin teachers in Australia.

#### **4.2 Philosophy**

Interview questions on *Colourstrings*' philosophy were used mainly because observation as a tool, without context, can be limited to interpretation. It could even be said that any teachers' underlying philosophy may be misinterpreted or even overlooked through sole use of observation. For example, when Williams gathered comments made by foreign teachers who observed teachers at the Kodály Institute he noted that Kodály functions as an approach stemming from conception and philosophy, but without that understanding observers mistakenly referred to Kodály as a "method" that uses "ta ta tee tee ta."<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Williams, 7.

The interview questions targeted the historical contexts, personal views and practices of the participants. Beatty, Leigh and Dean suggest that philosophy of teaching can reflect personal values and connect teachers to those with common ideals, thereby informing teaching practices. Furthermore, one's philosophy of teaching is rooted in historical contexts.<sup>349</sup> For this reason, the first questions asked of the participants were connected to the contextual philosophy of *Colourstrings*: i.e. Zoltán Kodály's approach to music education and the extent to which elements of it are employed continually after *Colourstrings*.

### **Kodály Philosophy and Maintaining a 'Balanced Musician'**

The common response from all participants was that the philosophies espoused by Zoltán Kodály form the basis for teaching the stages before, during and after *Colourstrings*, regardless of the age or level of the pupil.<sup>350</sup> Seventy-five percent of the participants said that they endeavoured to maintain continuous *balance* in the development of theoretical understanding, musical reading, technical facility, listening ability and emotional expressivity for every student. This reflects Kodály's beliefs for good musical training:

The characteristics of a good musician can be summarized as follows:

1. *A well-trained ear.*
2. *A well-trained intelligence.*
3. *A well-trained heart.*
4. *A well-trained hand.*

All four must develop together, in constant equilibrium.<sup>351</sup>

The above-mentioned characteristics of a good musician are referred to in the aims of *Colourstrings* in the *Handbook*.<sup>352</sup> Szilvay indicated to Mitchell that these

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<sup>349</sup> Joy E. Beatty, Jennifer S. A. Leigh, Kathy Lund Dean, "Philosophy Rediscovered" *Journal of Management Education*, vol. 33, no. 1 (February 2009), 99.

<sup>350</sup> This suggests that elements of Kodály training can be utilised at the university level.

<sup>351</sup> Kodály, *The Selected Writings*, 174.

characteristics are developed in every lesson,<sup>353</sup> however, in the interview for this research Szilvay recommended that teachers should check such balance monthly,<sup>354</sup> which would ensure that the progress of this continual development was reflected on regularly.

The participants discussed the characteristics of a good musician according to Zoltán Kodály in different ways. Fifty percent of participants emphasised the balance of technical skills relative to violin playing, whilst the remaining fifty percent tended to focus more on general musical skills, particularly general listening, inner listening (imagination) and emotional expressivity.

One vital technical aim for students that emerged was efficient coordination of the hands. EHMI:2 said that one of their general aims with all students is to maintain a good balance between right-hand technique and left-hand technique as well as musical reading and phrasing.<sup>355</sup> The comment suggests that some violin students are more confident with their left-hand ability than with their right, and vice versa, leading to an irrational feel for playing. In support of EHMI:2's claim, the great violinist Mischa Elman agreed that coordination and equality of both hands are significant in achieving technical mastery of the violin.<sup>356</sup>

General musicianship skills were also identified as significant to help achieve quality and accuracy in violin playing. Musicianship skills such as hearing and 'inner-hearing' tended to be discussed by Szilvay and EHMI:1, more so than specific issues

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<sup>352</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 141.

<sup>353</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 44.

<sup>354</sup> Géza Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>355</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>356</sup> Martens, *Violin Mastery*, 27.

of solely violin technique. That is not to say that training these skills dominates their violin lessons: Szilvay discussed the importance of inner hearing and imagination because it relates to how one plays the violin and consequently one's technique:

... one should listen to oneself, spend time reflecting on one's own imagination. Otherwise there will be no connection between the violin and the self. If there is no controlling of the inner hearing then there will be no control over the violin.<sup>357</sup>

The above quotation from Szilvay underscores his belief that there should be an *organic connection* between the instrument and the player, which starts from a thought that then triggers physical action. Although he repeatedly offers physical support to his students during the initial learning stages of the actions of violin playing,<sup>358</sup> Szilvay's quotation also suggests that the initial thoughts of students are malleable too and so need to be trained just as carefully. The initial thoughts, which equate to the inner hearing of the violin player, can be according to Szilvay, developed carefully through musicianship training, especially singing. As a result, musicianship is a core part of pre-instrumental and instrumental training in *Colourstrings*,<sup>359</sup> and has direct influence on the violin playing. Szilvay expanded on Kempter's theory in *Colourstrings* by creating tutor books that not only focus on training the actions of violin playing, but also help train inner thoughts to direct actions using "silent recitation;" an activity that is frequently attached to the songs and exercises in *Violin ABC*.<sup>360</sup> The skill is developed in two ways in *Colourstrings*: practising the skill by itself or in combination with another skill, such as clapping or

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<sup>357</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>358</sup> Banney, 1.

<sup>359</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>360</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 14.

even playing the violin. The combination technique may enhance the teaching of controlling silent recitation, as active sounds have to be coordinated with inactive sounds.

Kodály believed that a similar pattern exists when it comes to singing from printed music: one can use inner hearing to imagine the sounds before the actual singing is implemented, and that this is preferable to “immediate implementation, aural perception and possible correction.”<sup>361</sup> This process can be argued if the objective of the singing or playing from printed music is for the purpose of sight-reading; however, given that inner hearing is a silent activity, it can (and probably should) always be practiced and used as an analytical tool before singing or playing from printed music.

Szilvay mentioned that ‘control’ was the chief objective of both inner hearing and violin playing. Inner hearing needs to be controlled if the violin playing is to be controlled, therefore inner hearing must be the preliminary objective. The legendary violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz had a similar opinion to Szilvay’s regarding ‘violin mastery’:

To me, it (violin mastery) means the ability to make the violin a perfectly controlled instrument guided by the skill and intelligence of the artist, to compel it to respond in movement to his every wish. The artist must always be superior to his instrument, it must be his servant, one that he can do with what he will.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 33.

<sup>362</sup> Martens, 52.

The road to ‘violin mastery’, as outlined by Heifetz, requires not only physical but also intellectual skills. However he also commented that his emotional feelings are linked to his tone production, for “the way my violin sounds is the way I feel inside: it is a very personal feeling...”<sup>363</sup> Similar words were used by EHMI:1 when discussing their aims for every student: “I would like to give to them all of the skills needed to express with the instrument what they hear and feel inside: awakening the love and beauty for classical music inside them.”<sup>364</sup> Here the teacher has indicated that their purpose of teaching and objective for the students is to bring music to life and enjoy it.

### **Enthusiasm and Motivation**

What is to be done? Teach music and singing at school in such a way that it is not a torture but a joy for the pupil; instil a thirst for finer music in him[/her], a thirst which will last for a lifetime.<sup>365</sup>

Kodály’s philosophy quoted above is reflected in EHMI:1’s aims previously mentioned, however maintaining the student’s enthusiasm was stated as important to all of the participants. It was also implied by all of the participants that giving the students opportunities to play chamber music in a social environment and performing frequently were ways to sustain, if not, increase enthusiasm. Szilvay stressed right from the earliest instruction in *Colourstrings*, playing chamber music could always be part of a violinist’s life: “From two-part game songs through to Béla Bartok’s

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<sup>363</sup> Heifetz: *God’s Fiddler*, directed by Peter Rosen (Peter Rosen Productions, 2011), DVD (EuroArts Music International, 2011).

<sup>364</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

<sup>365</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 13.

*Divertimento*, playing chamber music should be part of the training all of the time and be a way of life.”<sup>366</sup>

Creating opportunities for students to perform and play in a social environment often relies on the teacher, or several teachers in forming a musically active environment for students. The program at the East-Helsinki Music Institute realises this through frequent group lessons, rehearsals, concerts and tours. The importance of these activities was stressed by EHMI:1, who also quoted one of Kodály’s philosophies:<sup>367</sup>

Music education is part of being human. The best is good enough for the students. Create crucial experiences that they will never forget so that they have a connection with classical music for their whole life. These crucial experiences, along with the technical and musical education should be between age 6 to 16 because the child is most gifted and open.<sup>368</sup>

There seems to be a general agreement on the desire to use performances as a tool for maintaining motivation. EHMI:2 uses concert performances as goals for their students, while EHMI:1 said that their students enjoy rewards and that the preparing for concerts helps maintain motivation.<sup>369</sup> Researchers in general pedagogy recognised this approach but further suggested that performance opportunities can play a key role in the students’ development by influencing the quality of learning.<sup>370</sup> While this statement was not originally targeted at music education, its main value is about teaching in general. From the comments made by the teachers at the East-

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<sup>366</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>367</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 21.

<sup>368</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Dianne Whitton, Catherine Sinclair, Katrina Barker, Phil Nanlohy and Mary Nosworthy, *Learning for Teaching: Teaching for Learning* (Victoria: Thomson Social Science Press), 176.

Helsinki Music Institute, they do use concert performances to increase the quality of learning.

EHMI:1 stated that enthusiasm can increase with the more knowledge and skills the students have with the instrument, while A1 expressed on similar lines that confidence in their abilities can aid to enhance enthusiasm.<sup>371</sup> These teachers believe that more skills and knowledge opens the door to more violin repertoire. Szilvay noticed that the level of enthusiasm varies for each individual student, and can change at different periods of his or her life.<sup>372</sup> Given that Szilvay's philosophy is that not all his students must be professionals but rather all should be treated equally, and as if they might become professionals,<sup>373</sup> he added in his interview the comment that students' enthusiasm could change, especially between the ages of fourteen to fifteen years.<sup>374</sup> This suggests, therefore, that if a young child shows minimal enthusiasm the teacher should not only strive to increase the child's motivation but also treat him or her with the same respect as an enthusiastic child who loves the instrument. Furthermore, the teacher should exercise patience because students might change their attitudes.

### **4.3 Methodology**

A given teaching methodology is fundamentally the way in which a teacher chooses to teach; because so many different possible teaching methodologies present themselves, the choice of method, techniques and curricula will inevitably depend on

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<sup>371</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>372</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>373</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

<sup>374</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.



the educational philosophy and preferences of a teacher. For this reason, all participants were asked how they teach students after *Colourstrings*. A variety of themes emerged such as the amount of contact time, remediation, lesson structure, how to teach a new piece of music, and posture.

### **Contact Time with Students**

Frequent musical activity and a musically rich environment can be key factors to a violin student's progress. If a violin teacher only has one lesson with their student each week (a common circumstance in Australian schools), then the quality of progress can be challenging for both teacher and student. In his interview Szilvay pointed out that when he began teaching at the institute he was originally given thirty minutes of contact time per week with each student, which he felt he had to divide in order to see the student more frequently:

I divided my time into two fifteen-minute lessons per week in the first decade at the East-Helsinki School. Then it went to forty-five minutes, so I made two fifteen-minute lessons and a fifteen-minute group class. By the end of the 1990s there were additional singing classes so music could be taken every day.<sup>375</sup>

Szilvay's last statement suggests that one of his objectives was to make music, (not necessarily the violin), an everyday activity for his students.<sup>376</sup> From Szilvay's example one can see that it is preferable if contact time with students is more frequent even if only for short periods, rather than for long periods spaced further apart. Szilvay did not mention the string ensemble rehearsals as well as the violin lessons

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<sup>375</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>376</sup> This is in line with Zoltán Kodály's objectives with bringing music into schools in Hungary and making it a core subject.

and group classes, however when asked how he was able to increase the contact time from thirty minutes to forty-five minutes he explained that the “quality of the string ensemble helped make this happen.”<sup>377</sup> From this remark it is possible to assume that the ensemble activity was noticed and appreciated by the school. It was not made clear by Szilvay exactly why the string ensemble won him stronger support from the school but it is reasonable to speculate that it may have been because the string ensemble demonstrated higher numbers of students achieving a common goal together.

Frequent contact time with students also means that teachers are able to look after the students’ posture more frequently. Posture is widely acknowledged as an important component of violin study considering its ergonomic difficulties. EHMI:1 stressed the importance of posture by saying that the “violin and all of the postural elements are too complex to see the child once a week.”<sup>378</sup> EHMI:1 and EHMI:2 listed their weekly contact time with their students, as comprising three group lessons for forty-five minutes, one individual lesson for forty-five minutes and one string chamber orchestra rehearsal.

In contrast to the other participants, A1 teaches from a private home studio and discussed how frequent contact time with students is difficult because of “the tyranny of urban geography and distance.”<sup>379</sup> Nevertheless, A1 has designed a program that seems to be inspired by the East-Helsinki Music Institute. A1’s students are given one private lesson and one group lesson per week in their first three years of study, both lessons lasting thirty minutes. In their fourth year of study, A1’s students are offered

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<sup>377</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>378</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

<sup>379</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

two private lessons of thirty minutes each and one group lesson of sixty minutes; however, the additional private lesson is not necessarily possible every week. After completing the *Violin ABC Book D*, A1's students prepare for an audition for the *Queensland Youth Orchestra Junior String Ensemble*, allowing for extra ensemble activity alongside group and private lessons.<sup>380</sup>

A1's program demonstrates a way to design a *Colourstrings*-inspired program in the context of teaching from a private home studio. The program leads towards playing in a string orchestra and perhaps is one of the goals for A1's students; however, contact time with students is still limited if A1 is unable to observe or participate in the string orchestra activities. This highlights one advantage of teaching in a school environment: it is easier for the teacher to get involved with their students' musical activities outside of the violin lessons, when the school provides these activities. A second advantage is that students are not discouraged by travel distance for their violin lessons: they are already at school. Conversely, problems can arise with teaching at a school during school-hours, such as not being able to get parents to observe the lessons and having to work around school agendas and timetabling. Getting the parents to observe lessons is an important part of violin lessons in *Colourstrings*.<sup>381</sup> The program at the East-Helsinki Music Institute demonstrates ways that these problems can be resolved but it must be remembered that the program, and consequently the developing musical culture, at the Institute took several years for Szilvay to establish.

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<sup>380</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>381</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 3.

## **Lesson Structure**

All participants discussed how they conduct private lessons and their comments revealed each had different approaches, depending on the students. The common characteristic shared by the participants is that they divide the lesson time. Szilvay spoke about how he divides lessons by having equal time devoted to him explaining and demonstrating, and also the pupil playing, further clarifying that verbal instruction can be active during the playing.<sup>382</sup> He noted that demonstrating to a pupil depends on the pupil's abilities so he stressed the need to balance skills: "Some students are good at imitating visually and some aurally: try to balance this."<sup>383</sup> In Mitchell's interview Szilvay expressed how he would remind himself in lessons that he tried to train the technique, the ear, the emotion and the intellect.<sup>384</sup> Dividing the lesson time as discussed by EHMI:2, however, was by topics or repertoire. For this teacher, technique of both hands is focussed on with a scale and etude, followed by music from two different periods: "baroque/classical and romantic/modern."<sup>385</sup> EHMI:1's comment revealed that their teaching approach is similar to EHMI:2, as every lesson includes: "scales, etudes, double-stops, bow-technique and the normal traditional repertoire."<sup>386</sup>

## **Starting a New Piece**

It emerged from the interviews with teachers from the East-Helsinki Music Institute that the task of teaching a new piece of violin repertoire involves a careful process. This process reflects the lesson structure in the sense that lesson time is spent on the

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<sup>382</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 44.

<sup>385</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>386</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

student's ear training, intellect, technique and emotion.<sup>387</sup> The teachers from the East-Helsinki Music Institute discussed how they start new pieces with their students by doing non-instrumental activities before the student begins playing the piece on the violin. Musical analysis and listening activities are included in the process to give the student a clearer picture of the tasks ahead of them. EHMI:1 indicated that before their student plays, they help them find the feeling of the piece by discussing the time signature, tempo, key signature, historical context of the piece and its composer.<sup>388</sup> Preparatory activities with the violin follow, succeeding from the musical analysis. Before EHMI:1's students read through the piece, they must "play the fitting scale,"<sup>389</sup> a process established before the songs in *Colourstrings Violin ABC Book B-D*, as their purpose is to serve as a key signature to get the student acquainted with the notes within the songs.<sup>390</sup> EHMI:1's comment indicates that beyond *Colourstrings* teachers and students can create their own exercises and improvisations, using musical elements of their chosen piece. It can be further added that this activity does not have to be solely for preparation, but also to set free the natural creativity of the student.<sup>391</sup>

Violin repertoire requires a substantial amount of preparation time due to the physical techniques necessary for violin playing. EHMI:2 said that they spend preparatory time discussing technical problems, fingerings, bowings, and then asking students to listen to a recording of their new piece one week beforehand so that they may have "a

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<sup>387</sup> Demonstrates another example where Kodály's philosophy of what constitutes a good musician is applied in the violin lesson.

<sup>388</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

This is referring to the scale relative to the key of the music, which the student must get attuned with before playing the music.

<sup>390</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 37.

<sup>391</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

picture of it.”<sup>392</sup> There could be more specific reasons added to this, such as hearing the accompaniment parts or to inform the student of performance styles however these were not mentioned. It was agreed by both teachers from the Institute that when the student understands the technical issues, phrasing and is comfortable reading the music, then they should have the ability to teach themselves in their own practice. It could be said that this is connected to another of Kodály’s principles when he discussed the purpose for teachers: “the way should be paved for direct intuition.”<sup>393</sup>

### **‘Light Hands’ and General Posture**

Violin posture is so unnatural that violinists have to constantly work on an ergonomic way of playing.<sup>394</sup>

The above quotation from EHMI:1 demonstrates their ongoing need for teaching posture. While there are many subtopics to discuss with regards to violin posture, three of the participants talked about the significance of having light hands while playing the violin and referred to playing flageolets as one way to achieve it. As discussed previously, flageolets require a soft contact with the string from the finger and thus have the potential to relax and unweight the left-hand if it has become unnecessarily heavy.<sup>395</sup> Since the materials in the *Violin ABC* books use flageolets extensively, they can be referred back to as a tool for postural remediation. A1’s comment when discussing flageolet exercises in the *Violin ABC* books for older students, reinforced the usefulness of these early exercises: “the completed books

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<sup>392</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>393</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 13.

<sup>394</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016

<sup>395</sup> Kempter, 88.

(*Colourstrings Violin ABC*) must be retained as a shelf-reference for reminder purposes ... cyclic learning is lasting learning.”<sup>396</sup>

Szilvay and EHMI:1 shared the view that lightening the left-hand helps lighten the right hand, while both further suggested learning from specialists in physiology. It was recommended by EHMI:1 that teachers should investigate *Alexander Technique* in order to invent exercises to help students “relax the body with the instrument.”<sup>397</sup> Stein’s study into the application of Alexander Technique with string playing shows why this statement is important, for a primary goal for string players employing Alexander Technique is to feel a sense of release, connectivity, freedom and flow without the instrument inhibiting movement.<sup>398</sup> The statement made by EHMI:1 indicates that their goal for the student is to get them to connect the body with instrument organically and become relaxed.

The importance of physical well-being was also recognised by Szilvay: he recommended that all students must play a sport. Playing sport and playing the violin both require and develop skills of physical coordination. One of the violin teachers at the Institute mentioned that a student might be able to accelerate faster with violin technique given he appeared so agile on the soccer field.<sup>399</sup> The question arises whether one affects the other. It could be argued that sport does not necessarily have impact on violin playing but it may have some effect on musical skills in general, or the reverse. For example, a school music teacher together with the physical education teacher observed that five- to six-year-old students who struggled with rhythm and

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<sup>396</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>397</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

<sup>398</sup> Stein, 72.

<sup>399</sup> Conversation with violin teacher, The East-Helsinki Music Institute, September 9, 2011.

singing in tune also struggled with sport.<sup>400</sup> These are only observations made by two teachers at a school but there is a consistency between their observations and the violin teacher at the East-Helsinki Music Institute in the sense that physical coordination skills are necessary requirements for both music and sport.

### **‘Building the Violinist’ and Remediation**

EHMI:2 discussed how the design of the *Colourstrings* materials helps develop a young beginner into a balanced violinist:

Colourstrings gives the teacher the opportunity to build up the violinist very carefully, step by step keeping everything in balance with each other being left-hand technique, right-hand technique, musical phrasing and music reading.<sup>401</sup>

The participants indicated that because the *Colourstrings* material presents individual concepts step by step, the need for remediation is reduced. When teaching students with a non-*Colourstrings* background, A1 said that they use *Colourstrings* materials because they require remediation “as a result of poorly sequenced learning or poorly developed postural habits and motor skills, or both.”<sup>402</sup> Remediation is not discussed in Szilvay’s writings, however, in his interview he indicated that remediation, at least as a concept, should be avoided: “Every lesson should go further and not be remedial. Every lesson should be a step forward.”<sup>403</sup> The teaching in the early years using *Colourstrings* therefore needs to be carefully constructed to avoid remedial teaching.

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<sup>400</sup> Susan Searle and Julia Piggin, “Kodály Method in Practice” (lecture, Museum of Old and New Art - MONA, August 25, 2016).

<sup>401</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>402</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>403</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.



## 4.4 Material

*Violin ABC Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages* provide a range of materials comprising traditional repertoire, chamber music, scales, etudes and sonatas. Beyond *Colourstrings*, there is a wealth of material for each of these categories through to the professional level. The participants were asked what materials they use after *Colourstrings* and whether or not they use a grade system to help narrow the choices from such a large quantity of repertoire. Interestingly, Szilvay and one other participant did not support using grade systems because it narrows choice, while the teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute advised the use of a grade system in their school program.

### Grade Systems

It was recommended by Szilvay that teachers should not follow a grade system but have lots of material to offer to pupils.<sup>404</sup> His attitude was echoed by A1, who commented they did not like grade systems but rather chose material suited to the child's development needs from their "vast library" of repertoire.<sup>405</sup> Szilvay mentioned that grade systems could be "dangerous because they are limited to only their repertoire."<sup>406</sup> That said, the teachers from the East-Helsinki Music Institute reported that their school had chosen to introduce a grading system. The idea of having a grade system at the Institute suggests that they may use examinations, which

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<sup>404</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>405</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>406</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

is surprising considering that Finnish primary schools generally avoid testing.<sup>407</sup> EHMI:1 and EHMI:2 provided an overview of the system (see **Appendix C** and **Appendix D**), and explained it was used for student concert activities. EHMI:1 referred to the concerts as ‘exams’, while EHMI:2 described two events: ‘big concerts’ and ‘little concerts.’ EHMI:2 explained that all the violin students performed their own “big concert once every three years with little concerts in between that allowed them to explore a variety of materials for violin performance.”<sup>408</sup>

The requirements set out for these concerts are not repertoire prescriptive, but rather offer a technical and musical framework for the teacher and pupil to “build repertoire.”<sup>409</sup> The repertoire that each pupil learns is therefore variable, which suggests that teachers need to have a wide selection of repertoire at their command and be prepared to learn or source new repertoire regularly if they are to avoid teaching the same thing to all their students. This stems from Szilvay’s attitude towards grade systems, and ensures repertoire is not limited to a few choices but rather open to the teacher and student. The grade system used at the Institute also aligns to ethos of the Finnish national curriculum for primary and secondary education as analysed by Sarjala, in that it is “more flexible and less detailed”<sup>410</sup> for the teacher.

The first grade requires the student to play three pieces in the first position with a pianist. This takes place when the student is approximately halfway through the *Violin*

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<sup>407</sup> Sarjala, 34.

<sup>408</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Sarjala, 34.

*ABC Book E*, and has “mastered scales within one octave.”<sup>411</sup> The Institute teachers offered some choices for repertoire in this grade, such as one piece from the *Colourstrings Violin Rascals*, one little concertino like Oskar Rieding’s *Violin Concerto in B-minor*, and one little piece from the Baroque period or any other style that offers a contrast of tempo. The second grade requires one concerto or concertino work as well as three small pieces within first to third positions. This can be for students studying *Violin ABC Book F*, who have mastered two-octave scales from first through to fifth positions, one-octave scales in double-stops (thirds, sixths and octaves) and chromatics. One piece that was suggested as an example was Antonio Vivaldi’s *Violin Concerto in G Major* alongside three other little pieces of varying tempi. In addition to this repertoire, the teachers from the Institute are considering adding excerpts from the string orchestra repertoire, with the added intention that it encourages the students to practice their ensemble music.<sup>412</sup>

To perform the third grade concert, the student should have mastered three-octave scales and one-octave scales in double stops (thirds, sixths and octaves). The concert repertoire requires five pieces with piano: one or two movements from a concerto within approximately five positions, one or two movements from a Baroque sonata, and also a short, contrasting pieces.<sup>413</sup> Movements from a Händel Sonata and a Finnish piece were recommended by EHMI:1.<sup>414</sup> It was not clarified whether it was required to be a piece by a Finnish composer however, it is likely that the inclusion to perform a Finnish piece is probably because it is their country of origin therefore in Australia it may be advisable to include an Australian work. Szilvay spoke positively

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<sup>411</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>412</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

<sup>413</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>414</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

of the violin syllabus for the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB), because it includes many Australian compositions.<sup>415</sup>

In between the big concerts for the grade system at the Institute, EHMI:2 said that there are many little concerts, requiring only one solo piece or pieces in a chamber ensemble.<sup>416</sup> To some extent, everything taught to the pupils contributes to the concerts. EHMI:1 mentioned that some students do more advanced exams following the three basic exams mentioned, however information regarding these was not provided because not every student does them.

The grade system being adopted by the Institute reflects the *Colourstrings* framework. Performing in concerts that require a variety of repertoire including solo pieces, sonatas with piano and chamber music, while scales and etudes are performed in lessons and group classes ultimately covers what is in the *Colourstrings* books following *Violin ABC Book D*. The use of the concerts in the Institute's curriculum indicates that adding material for students to learn to that which is included in the *Colourstrings* books can begin while the students are studying *Violin ABC Book E*.

When asked about the AMEB, not all participants could answer because they are unfamiliar with it. Szilvay however, is familiar with the syllabus and advised that when *Colourstrings* students are studying *Violin ABC Book E*, "they are approximately at about the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade AMEB level."<sup>417</sup> A1 wished to avoid comparing because no sequential correlation between *Colourstrings* and AMEB is identifiable,

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<sup>415</sup> Géza Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>416</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>417</sup> Géza Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

adding, “Examples of Grade 2 repertoire are adjacent to some Grade 7 repertoire.”<sup>418</sup> The critiques of the AMEB grades are greatly different between Szilvay and A1, however this research has found that some of the repertoire and technical demands in *Violin ABC* can correspond with the AMEB Violin Syllabus supporting both A1 and Szilvay’s views. *Colourstrings* introduces the first through to fifth positions on the violin fingerboard,<sup>419</sup> which are required for the first through fourth grades of the AMEB.<sup>420</sup> However, there are extracts from traditional repertoire in *Violin ABC* and the *Yellow Pages*, which can be found in the seventh grade of the AMEB syllabus. This research cannot clarify what AMEB grade level a *Colourstrings* student is, however from the responses given with regards to AMEB, the syllabus is useful for Australian teachers for repertoire but not for classifying the level of a violinist.

## Scales

The *Colourstrings Scales* books indicate that students can work on Carl Flesch’s *Scale System* following *Colourstrings*,<sup>421</sup> which Szilvay reaffirmed in his interview. Some new features of Carl Flesch’s *Scale System* for the *Colourstrings* violin student to discover are new arpeggios and scales in double-stops. Double-stops in particular could be a difficult task not only because the *Scale Books* do not cover double-stops, but also because the materials in the *Violin ABC* books generally avoid successive double-stops. In *Violin ABC* the material mostly uses open string double-notes or double-harmonics in succession. Bridging from the exercises in *Violin ABC* to full

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<sup>418</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>419</sup> Even though higher positions on the fingerboard have been employed as early as *Book A*, numeric positions and repertoire in the high positions do not feature in *Colourstrings*.

<sup>420</sup> *Violin Technical Work*, Australian Music Examinations Board, 2011, 67-93.

<sup>421</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Scales and Arpeggios* (vol. 3), 2.

double-stops in Flesch, might be necessary before tackling scales and arpeggios in double-stops. I suggested this to Szilvay to which he agreed was a good idea to try.<sup>422</sup>

Two participants said that they use different scale materials, including Hans Sitt Scale exercises.

### **Changes of Position**

When interviewed, Szilvay said that studying positions is not a must and that students do not need to know, for example, that they are in 3rd or 4th position. Instead, the student must “understand that each finger can have three basic positions: flat, neutral and high.”<sup>423</sup> While these basic positions for each finger were exercised in *Violin ABC Book E-F*, the repertoire and exercises were predominantly in the first position of the fingerboard. Using known repertoire, i.e. material that the students already know, but changing the fingerings provides an exercise on changes of position and consequently changes the intervals in between the fingers. This activity is used by all of the participants while their students used the *Colourstrings* books; however, only one participant mentioned that they do it with material studied after *Colourstrings*. The remaining participants shared the common response that they use traditional etude materials to cover change of position. Szilvay mentioned that a *Colourstrings Violin ABC Book G* focusing on changes of position is in preparation; however, he added: “there are already many brilliant books covering the subject.”<sup>424</sup>

### **Chamber Music**

Students should play in a variety of string chamber ensembles such as duos, trios, quartets, quintets and orchestra (with or without extra soloists). The majority of

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<sup>422</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>423</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. For example: Franz Wohlfahrt *Sixty Studies*, Op. 45.

participants said they avoided symphonic works and focused on string chamber music until a student was around eighteen years old. Their reasons were based on the difficulties that can incur when adding wind and brass instruments at too young an age: for young strings players the distraction of so many other timbres often meant that intonation and overall sound production both suffered.<sup>425</sup> Szilvay added that there were few high-quality symphonic repertoire works written for children but there are many pieces of string music for children, including works by Vivaldi, for example. Further to this, Szilvay advised that one should try to delay the string ensemble music by Viennese classical composers, particularly Mozart, because the subtleties in this music require advanced listening and control. By contrast however, Szilvay further recommended violin duo arrangements of Mozart as a resource for duo repertoire.<sup>426</sup> This is probably because one can do intensive, individual work with one young student on the subtleties in the music in a manner that is not possible when working with a large ensemble of young students. A1 agreed with using Mozart's duos, further adding Telemann's *Canonic Duos* and Bartok's *44 Violin Duets* to the list.<sup>427</sup>

## **Etudes**

As to instrumental technique the etude literature is equally important to traditional concerto, sonata and performing pieces.<sup>428</sup>

This quotation from Szilvay shows that etude material should remain a constant and equal part of violin study. In his interview, Szilvay mentioned resources for etude

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<sup>425</sup> EHMI:1, e-mail message to author, June 8, 2016.

<sup>426</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>427</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>428</sup> Géza Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

material in a similar order to Loughnan<sup>429</sup> and Mitchell,<sup>430</sup> which shows that his ideas on etude materials have remained constant for over the past twenty years. The resources for etude repertoire recommended after *Colourstrings* by Szilvay include Franz Wohlfahrt *Sixty Studies*, Op. 45, Heinrich Ernst Kayser *36 Violin Studies*, Op. 20, Charles Dancla *15 Studies for the Violin*, Op. 68, Jakob Dont *Gradus ad Parnassum (I, II, III)*, Peregrin Feigerl *24 Exercises for Violin*, Jacques Féréol Mazas *Melodious and Progressive Studies for the Violin*, Op. 36, Jakob Dont *24 Studies Preparatory to Kreutzer and Rode Studies*, Op. 37, Rudolphe Kreutzer *42 Etudes or Caprices for Violin*, Federigo Fiorillo *36 Etudes or Caprices*, Op. 3, Jacques Pierre Rode *24 Caprices*, Pierre Gaviniès *24 Studies*, and Jakob Dont *24 Etudes or Caprices* Op. 35. Szilvay recommended in addition that the final three series of etudes should be studied before Niccolò Paganini *24 Caprices for Solo Violin*, Op. 1.<sup>431</sup>

Pieces or extracts from many of the above resources are already used in *Colourstrings Violin ABC* and *Yellow Pages*, which indicates that once the student has completed the *Colourstrings* material there is no need to go from the beginning of the list. The advantage of the design of *Colourstrings* is that etude repertoire corresponds with specific concepts of violin playing.

### **Performance Pieces**

All participants mentioned that they used the traditional sonata, concerto, and solo repertoire for performance pieces; however, the list of traditional repertoire for violin is so massive that one can spend a lifetime studying this music. A1 was the only participant to give specific recommendations, which included repertoire for solo violin,

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<sup>429</sup> Loughnan, 40-41

<sup>430</sup> Mitchell, 66

<sup>431</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 5, 2011).



violin and piano, and concerti. The list of recommended concerto repertoire included Banney's Concertino No. 2 in E minor, Oskar Rieding Op. 35, Ferdinand K  chler Op. 15, and the various student concerti by Friedrich Seitz.<sup>432</sup> The violin and piano repertoire included Henri Wieniawski *Obertass*, Op. 19 and a selection of small pieces by Edward Elgar such as his Opus 15 pieces and *Salut d'Amour*, Op.12. Telemann *12 Fantasies*, TWV 40:14-25 were recommended for solo pieces.<sup>433</sup>

## 4.5 General Comments and Advice

### Teacher Training

*Colourstrings* is not a quick method, nor a quick teacher-training program. The depth and complexity is at the same time the reason why *Colourstrings* is such a successful approach resulting in very well trained young musicians. All of the interviewees in this research recommended that teacher-training courses are essential to have a deep understanding of the *Colourstrings* approach and use the materials most effectively. It was further suggested to repeat courses as it takes a long time to become familiar with the material,<sup>434</sup> indeed A1 recommended ongoing assistance and feedback from an experienced *Colourstrings* teacher as well as undertaking the teaching courses.<sup>435</sup> EHMI:2 discussed the progression of becoming a *Colourstrings* teacher indicating that employing the methodology is a learning experience within itself. After the first course, the teacher can start new students, then do another course and start new students again, hopefully seeing what changes they may make with first- and second-

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<sup>432</sup> A1's list of recommended repertoire included works of Australian composers including David Banney and Leanne Bear, both of whom have written violin solo, sonata and chamber works, while also having a history of being involved with *Colourstrings* in Australia.

<sup>433</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

<sup>434</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>435</sup> A1, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2016.

generation students. Little by little the teacher begins to understand the *Colourstrings* approach as they work towards certification. Certification means that the teacher has realised the aims and approach explored throughout the *Colourstrings* materials is the way he or she wants to experience with students in their study of violin performance.<sup>436</sup>

The *Colourstrings* material provides a safety belt for an inexperienced teacher, and as one's experience increases through the years, the possibilities to vary and include other material side by side with *Colourstrings* expands. EHMI:2 advised that after ten years of using *Colourstrings*, the teacher will feel that they know a lot about how to teach a young violinist, also knowing that the more the teacher learns, the more he or she wants to learn in addition. When the teacher achieves this, then he or she has found a positive circle of learning, which gives motivation to do their best work.<sup>437</sup>

### **Mozart and Folksongs**

When asked for advice about when to introduce Mozart's *Violin Concerti* to students, Szilvay recommended first investigating the violin duo arrangements of Mozart's music, for these duos have a wealth of Austrian folk music in them. Szilvay went on to say that the reason why the *Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra* plays Mozart so well is because they know it; they grew up learning, singing and dancing it. He also commented that J.S. Bach was the first big collector of German and French folk music and traditions,<sup>438</sup> which suggests that if one has a rich upbringing of German and French folk music then it should influence their playing of J.S. Bach's music. The statements made by Szilvay reaffirm Kodály's philosophy that classical music comes

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<sup>436</sup> EHMI:2, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2016.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

from folksongs,<sup>439</sup> and that it is important to investigate music from this source. A rich upbringing of folksongs, such as *Colourstrings*, has a constructive effect on a musician's grasp of classical music.

### **Sources for Inspiration**

The following violinists and pedagogues were common inspirations among the participants: Max Rostal, Paul Rolland, Gerhard Schulz, Géza Szilvay and Réka Szilvay. While student-teacher genealogies connect some of these artists, the characteristic common to all of these artists is that they all hold, or have held professional careers as teachers and chamber musicians, (especially in string quartets). If expert players and teachers also perform chamber music, then it makes sense that when teaching violinists the techniques to perform chamber music well should be an important factor of their tuition – as it is in *Colourstrings*.

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<sup>439</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 23-25.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Implications

The ideas presented in this chapter form the conclusion of the thesis by summarising key factors of student development through *Colourstrings* and offering suggestions with regards to development beyond *Colourstrings*. The ideas presented here are based on the work conducted in this research project: an analysis of *Colourstrings* materials, observations made at the East-Helsinki Music Institute and data collected from the interviews with Géza Szilvay, teachers at the Institute and a certified *Colourstrings* teacher in Australia. A general program of violin study following on from *Colourstrings* has been formulated to complement this chapter, which, is not a complete guide of what to teach following *Colourstrings* but suggest resources and starting points for violin teachers.

#### 5.1 Philosophical Foundations

The aim of *Colourstrings* is for each pupil to develop as a well-rounded musician and person, regardless of their ‘talent’.<sup>440</sup> In reference to the word ‘talent,’ Szilvay believes every pupil has a talent, and it is the role of the teacher to draw out talent.<sup>441</sup> In order to do this the teacher must individualise the delivery of their teaching so that it serves the needs of the pupil above the needs of the instrument or the music. The music profession might be a future possibility for all students, however it should not

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<sup>440</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (1977), 3.

<sup>441</sup> “Géza Szilvay in Australia 2/3,” *YouTube* (January 13, 2011), accessed May 9, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhSEiFypiNk>.

be made mandatory; the teacher should approach each student with this in mind.<sup>442</sup>  
Any child has the potential to achieve well playing the violin.

Zoltán Kodály's philosophy towards music education should be well understood by the teacher who wishes to use *Colourstrings* effectively. Kodály's philosophies were found to have a great impact on Géza Szilvay and the teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute. Regardless of whether the pupil is studying through *Colourstrings* materials or has advanced beyond them, Szilvay's teaching is based on philosophies set out by Kodály for all levels and for any age. Behaviour, attitudes, methodologies and techniques employed by Szilvay and the teachers at the East-Helsinki Music Institute stem from, or can be linked to Kodály. Key characteristics found in this research such as growth mindset, teamwork, nurturing, and demand for the highest quality of music making are examples of Kodály's philosophy for teaching children.<sup>443</sup>

Kodály's principle of what constitutes a well-trained musician<sup>444</sup> was consistently referred to, not only in Szilvay's writings, but also amongst the interviewees in this research. Furthermore, the *Colourstrings* materials were created with this philosophy in mind as they help maintain the development of ear training, reading, intellect, violin technique and emotion in equilibrium with each other.<sup>445</sup> Methodologies such as lesson structures, teaching techniques, and interactive activities employed by Szilvay and the *Colourstrings* teachers stem from Kodály's philosophy.

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<sup>442</sup> Szilvay, telephone interview with the author, May 10, 2016.

<sup>443</sup> Kodály, *The Selected Writings*, 148.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>445</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 141.

### **Further Understanding the Kodály Approach**

There are multiple resources teachers can use to help their understanding of Kodály's approach to music education. Vinden's publications<sup>446</sup> can be used as resources for Australian-based teachers who wish to incorporate musicianship training with violin study through and beyond *Colourstrings*. This research further suggests using the Kodály Institute's video demonstrations of music classes, pedagogy training and choral activities,<sup>447</sup> as a guide towards understanding and employing Kodály's approach. At present in the Australian context, there are Kodály organisations offering teacher training.<sup>448</sup>

## **5.2 Methodology and Application**

The teaching methods applied by the *Colourstrings* teachers interviewed for this research also stem from Kodály's philosophies. They reinforced the focus of their work centred from the student's perspective: the student must be the focal point when teaching so that learning music and playing the violin serve the needs of the individual student. For the individual talents of students to blossom, these teachers do not expect talent but instead create an environment for talent to flourish. The environment at the East-Helsinki Music Institute particularly, is musically active and stimulating. Instrumental and non-instrumental activities such as private lessons, group lessons, chamber music, orchestra, choir and musicianship classes are examples of the activities currently operating at the Institute.<sup>449</sup> Taking all of these musical

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<sup>446</sup> David Vinden, *Musicianship Through Singing* (London: Kodály Centre of London, 2010). Materials can be found at [Kodalycentre.co.uk](http://Kodalycentre.co.uk).

<sup>447</sup> *The Kodály Concept of Music Education in Practice*, DVD.

<sup>448</sup> Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia – KMEIA.

<sup>449</sup> "An example of fair art education: The East Helsinki Music Institute in cooperation with the Porolahti Comprehensive School," Nordic Union of Art and Music Schools, accessed March 1, 2017,

activities into account, it seems difficult for a single teacher alone to be responsible for them all, especially given their variety. Szilvay and the East-Helsinki Music Institute teachers make considerable use of collaboration to address this problem, while in Australia it is recommended that one make use of school and youth orchestra programs.

### **Private Lessons**

Private lessons can be given once or twice each week and can be divided in several ways depending on the methods of delivery, the individual strengths and weaknesses of the student, or the materials. For example, equal amounts of time can be apportioned for verbal explanation, demonstration and the pupil playing. The components of the private violin lessons at the East-Helsinki Music Institute are imbued with Kodály's philosophies for creating a well-trained musician.<sup>450</sup> These include reading music, theory, ear training, emotion and instrumental technique. The teacher can use a reminder tactic by asking himself or herself: "Have I looked after the ear, heart, brain and hand?"<sup>451</sup> Implementing each of these components in the lesson can be done with or without the violin. Theoretical concepts can be taught through the violin, thus allowing more lesson time to be given overall to instrumental playing. Aural training can also be implemented through playing the instrument, however for Szilvay, singing, 'inside singing' and movement activities need to be part of the lesson. Left hand technique and right hand technique should be balanced with each other for the purposes of rational coordination and control. Lesson time can be divided by isolating these components, if necessary.

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[http://www.nordicmusicartschools.org/uploads/1/3/4/6/13464492/yvonne\\_frye\\_fairarteducationkongress.pdf](http://www.nordicmusicartschools.org/uploads/1/3/4/6/13464492/yvonne_frye_fairarteducationkongress.pdf).

<sup>450</sup> Kodály, *The Selected Writings*, 174.

<sup>451</sup> Mitchell, "A Qualitative Study," 45.

New repertoire should be analysed together with the student before any playing occurs. As a goal, the student should internalise how the music might sound using inner hearing. When the student is able to read through the music comfortably on their violin, then they can work on it alone in their practice. To avoid spending too much time on analysis, the repertoire needs to be suitably achievable for the student. If the repertoire is large then break it up into smaller sections, preferably in a way that reveals a logical structure. If there are too many new concepts to explain, then that will mean more time to learn the piece and potentially increase the chance of the student making errors, and needing remedial work. Both can contribute to frustrating the student and therefore selection of material is significant. Something similar can be said regarding the selection of materials for sight-reading. According to Kodály, sight-reading material should be readily achievable for the student without struggle:

Sight-reading material should always be given of lesser difficulty than the student's actual level of knowledge in order that it can always be performed faultlessly if possible. If the pupil struggles with it or gets stuck, then sight-reading is of no benefit.<sup>452</sup>

### **Group Activities**

Students can have two to three weekly group lessons depending on their age and level<sup>453</sup>. Group activity should be more frequent than private lessons as they provide opportunities for social musical activity. Potentially group lessons allow students to learn from each other, and as a result maintain or increase motivation, which effect

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<sup>452</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 33.

<sup>453</sup> The number of students varies from five to ten in the group classes at the East-Helsinki Music Institute.



student outcomes positively. Activities can alternate between solo playing and multiple-part repertoire, scales, etudes, singing and games. The teacher can act in a way similar to a conductor in order to demonstrate musical gestures, which also helps prepare students for the orchestral environment.

Orchestral rehearsals can be divided into two sessions: a section tutorial and the tutti rehearsal. Teachers should meet before the rehearsal to discuss the tasks ahead, and be active assistants in the tutti rehearsal, either by standing at the back or in amongst their section assisting pupils, checking postures, tuning and making suggestions to the conductor.<sup>454</sup>

Chamber music is taught from the earliest possible stage, comprising everything from two-part clapping games through to string ensemble repertoire. Chamber music in small ensembles such as quartets with viola and cello students can replace single-instrumental group lessons when the students are approximately in the sixth grade and older, and well past *Colourstrings* materials.<sup>455</sup>

### **General Musicianship**

Musicianship training should be integrated in the violin lessons and be an ongoing part of studying the violin. It includes aural training, musical literacy, composition, improvisation, dictation, interactive movement and games, however it is essential that the core activity of the training should be through singing. Skills such as inner hearing and sight-singing are examples of everyday musical activities that can always be

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<sup>454</sup> This can also help demonstrate teamwork and equality to the students.

<sup>455</sup> “An example of fair art education: The East Helsinki Music Institute in cooperation with the Porolahti Comprehensive School,” Nordic Union of Art and Music Schools, accessed March 1, 2017, [http://www.nordicmusicartschools.org/uploads/1/3/4/6/13464492/yvonne\\_frye.\\_fairarteducationkongress.pdf](http://www.nordicmusicartschools.org/uploads/1/3/4/6/13464492/yvonne_frye._fairarteducationkongress.pdf).

improved.<sup>456</sup> These skills can be developed whenever the teacher prioritises time for analysing the repertoire with the pupil. Topics for musical analysis include key, time, tempo, modulations, phrasing, structure and historical information about the piece and the composer.

It is suggested that all the basic triads of the major and minor scales are thoroughly understood after *Colourstrings*. The *Colourstrings* scale books use the tonic triad and an inversion of the sub-dominant triad, however there are no indications of chord symbols or inversion numbers. Learning the basic triads can be done initially by using solfège and letter-names, as they are in the *Colourstrings* scales books, but following this the student should become aware of chord numbers and the intervals between the notes inside chords. These skills also help prepare students for understanding chords and arpeggios used in the repertoire they perform and more advanced scale systems than *Colourstrings* scale books.<sup>457</sup>

### **Environmental Contexts**

In the context of private home studio teaching, the research undertaken found that it was recommended students should enrol in external music programs to help support musicianship and orchestral training, such as a youth orchestra program or a Kodály-based music school to help develop their general musicianship continuously from infancy to adult. However, it was also recommended that the youth orchestra program should be a string orchestra and not a full symphony orchestra until students are at university level. The teacher should try to get involved in the orchestra program if not

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<sup>456</sup> Becky Welsh, “The Importance of Inner Hearing, *British Kodály Academy* (May, 2010), accessed March 10, 2017: [www.britishKodalyacademy.org/Kodaly\\_approach\\_archive\\_importance-inner-hearing\\_becky-welsh.htm](http://www.britishKodalyacademy.org/Kodaly_approach_archive_importance-inner-hearing_becky-welsh.htm).

<sup>457</sup> For example: Carl Flesch *Scale System*.

at least to observe the activities and how their student responds to the orchestral environment. If it is not possible to refer a student to a Kodály-based music school, then it was suggested that collaborating with a theory teacher or pianist may be a way to help musicianship training, particularly music theory, outside of the instrumental training.

It was noted that private teaching in a school environment can be problematic, given school requirements and agendas, however, having a string ensemble set up at the school may help increase wider support from the school given the communal aspects of ensemble work. If there are general music classes at the school, it was suggested as preferable to organise the students' lessons on days where there were no general music classes. This way, students can have music every day, or at least more than once a week, which is an important objective stated by both Kodály and Szilvay.

### **5.3 Materials Beyond *Colourstrings***

The tools obtained from *Colourstrings* training provide the student with the skills to access substantial amounts of music. The research confirmed it was not possible to define exactly what materials to teach and what order to teach them in during or after *Colourstrings* as so much depends on the individuality of the student and the teacher. A quality violin teacher does not rely solely on books or guidelines because the methods used to teach one student might not necessarily suit another.<sup>458</sup> Success therefore depends heavily on the teacher's ability to teach, what repertoire they know, and how adaptable they are to serve the needs of each student.

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<sup>458</sup> Kempter, 12.

Choksy's judgment of Kodály teachers was that they are "practitioners of music education and do not rely on books or written guidelines."<sup>459</sup> Kodály's quotation, although in reference to class music teachers, suggests Choksy's view should be considered:

Nobody can prescribe which songs can be taught...it always depends on the progress of each class, and can only be judged by the class teacher.<sup>460</sup>

Referring to another method or grade system after *Colourstrings* may appear to be a simple option, however it limits the teacher and the student's musical development. One solution, posited in this research, is to categorise traditional violin repertoire in terms of its genre, style and technical features in order to create a framework for each individual student to build repertoire within. This is currently being practised at the East-Helsinki Music Institute as their method of a grade system. A curriculum for studying the violin after *Colourstrings* has been formulated using the framework approach (see Appendix C and Appendix D). The possibilities for repertoire are almost limitless, however there are unfinished pieces in the *Colourstrings Violin ABC Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages* where extracts are used for specific purposes. Szilvay encouraged teachers to make use of the original repertoire when the extracts appealed to the student.<sup>461</sup> Consequently some of these pieces were included as repertoire suggestions in this proposed post-*Colourstrings* curriculum.

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<sup>459</sup> Choksy, 5.

<sup>460</sup> Kodály, *Music Should Belong to Everyone*, 33.

<sup>461</sup> Géza Szilvay, "The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello" (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 4, 2011).

The categories of the curriculum framework align to how repertoire is divided in the *Colourstrings*: performance pieces (solo or accompanied), sonatas for violin and piano, concerti, etude material, scales, duos, chamber music and string orchestra. It should be noted that the ‘concerti’ category is not specifically targeted in *Colourstrings*, however it was found that *Colourstrings* teachers introduce concerti or ‘concertinos’ to their pupils during their study through *Book E* and *Book F*. Duos, chamber music and string orchestra have been clustered together into one column as ‘group activity’. Folk music has been deliberately left out of the curriculum, however that is not to say that one should disregard investigating folk music.

The repertoire suggestions in the appendices have been categorised by general technical facility and the approximate year of learning for the student. It is important to note that the instruction during *Colourstrings* is meant to last approximately four to five years and is the same for all students, while instruction from the fifth year onwards can vary in terms of time and is more dependent on the student’s interest. String orchestra and chamber music, however, should be constant for all students.

### **Performance Pieces**

One important finding in this research was the relevance of Telemann’s *12 Fantasies* and that they should be played not only for their technical and artistic value, but also as preparatory repertoire to Bach’s *Six Violin Sonatas and Partitas*.<sup>462</sup> Telemann’s pieces should be revisited after *Colourstrings* as each piece offers higher levels of technique and artistry, while Bach’s pieces are widely regarded as some of the most

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<sup>462</sup> Géza Szilvay, “The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello” (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 5, 2011).

important works ever written for solo violin. Both of these compositions should be approached with great care.

Volumes from the *Suzuki Violin School* are indicated in the appendices from using Loughnan, Mitchell and Pohjola's research. Repertoire from *Suzuki Volumes I-VI* can be used for pieces during the first four years and additional repertoire from *Volumes VII & VIII* can be used in the following three years.<sup>463</sup> These books can be useful due to the fact that they include a mixture of sonatas, concerti and accompanied performance pieces.

### **Sonatas with Piano**

Sonatas with piano should be carefully taught so that students understand how to play together with other musicians and, at the same time, learn that the violinist should be an equal partner with the pianist. Szilvay considered sonatas with piano are a form of chamber music and students should understand when their role is either accompanying or melodic, and also how to make musical changes cooperatively with their pianist.<sup>464</sup>

Sonatas for violin and keyboard written by composers of the Baroque period are suggested for study after *Colourstrings*. Extracts of sonatas from composers such as Corelli, Händel and Leclair, for example, were found in *Violin ABC Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages*. This raises the question as to when sonatas from later periods such as romantic and modern sonatas are given to the student. While many of the technical demands of these works may have been covered in *Colourstrings*, it is fair to say that

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<sup>463</sup> Loughnan, 40.

<sup>464</sup> Rossa et al., *Violin Rascals Cello Rascals 123: Piano Accompaniment*, 6.

perhaps the student may not be ready for the musical and theoretical demands such works. Szilvay carefully selected the *Colourstrings* repertoire so that the student can gain a holistic understanding of every piece. In sonatas by Beethoven and Brahms for example, there are many instances of complex harmonies, thick textures and potentially loud volumes from the piano, all of which may overwhelm the young student. The same principle underscores Szilvay's comments about symphony orchestras: firstly, the fact that the great composers did not write symphonic works for children, and secondly, that the loud volumes from wind and brass instruments can disturb a young and inexperienced string player's ability to listen.

### **Scales**

One of the central tenets of studying the violin is learning scales. The inevitable implication of such a concept is that scales form a separate component of violin methods and grade systems from early beginner material such as *Colourstrings*, through to the advanced grades of formal examination systems. The transition from *Colourstrings* to traditionally used scale systems should be effectively managed by the teacher. Through using singing and inner hearing, the *Colourstrings* violin student is able to play any scale in any position along the violin fingerboard. Relative solmisation, absolute letter names and intervallic relationships are tools used for aural recognition and understanding of scales and arpeggios. Szilvay expressed this by saying "the ear must lead the fingers."<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Géza Szilvay, "The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Colourstrings Course for Instrumental Teachers of Violin, Viola, and Cello" (lecture, St. Paul Lavanttal/Kärnten, Austria, August 2, 2011).

One can progress to Carl Flesch's *Scale System* after *Colourstrings*,<sup>466</sup> however this research identified a number of gaps between the two systems that may require particular preparation. Firstly, there are a few selected arpeggios not covered in *Colourstrings*. The arpeggios not covered in *Colourstrings* Scale books, which appear in Flesch *Scale System*, are the broken chords: 6, diminished-7, dominant-7, and the altered chord-4 minor. It can be argued that the chord-6 and altered chord-4 do appear in *Colourstrings* because chord-6 presents the relative minor chord of the Major mode and the altered chord-4 are found in the relative minor arpeggios.<sup>467</sup> A theoretical difference between *Colourstrings Scales* and Flesch's *Scale System* is that Flesch uses enharmonic writing to present arpeggios of altered chords.<sup>468</sup> The teacher can use solmisation in two ways to explain Flesch's arpeggios thoroughly and for the student to gain a proper understanding of arpeggios. Firstly, one can use the altered solfège names to show the altered notes,<sup>469</sup> and secondly, the solfège names of relative keys can be used in their place. For example, the broken chord: 'DO-MI-SO-TA' shows the lowered 7<sup>th</sup> tone of the scale degree, while the solmisation of the relative sub-dominant key can be borrowed to show unaltered notes: 'SO-TI-RE-FA' respectively, in which case shows the modulation of keys.

Playing scales and arpeggios in double-stops is the second key difference between Flesch's scales and *Colourstrings*. To prepare to play scales and arpeggios in double-stops the *Colourstrings* student is taught to internalise the concept from aural and theory training before tackling the technical challenges on the violin. As a starting

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<sup>466</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (1977), 3.

<sup>467</sup> Szilvay, *Violin Scales and Arpeggios* 3, 5.

These chords of the relative minor mode can be used as a way to fill the gap of learning chord 6 and altered chord 4 arpeggios.

<sup>468</sup> Carl Flesch, *Scale System*, rev. ed. Max Rostal (Berlin: Verlag von Ries and Erler, 1987), 31.

<sup>469</sup> All altered Solmisation syllables are presented in *Violin ABC Book F*: page 62.



point the student must know the sounds of the various intervals, namely thirds, sixths, octaves and tenths.<sup>470</sup> This can be done in several ways but it is suggested that the student sing these intervals confidently, ideally together with the teacher as a duet activity, or sing one note while playing the other. Complementing this activity, the student also needs to be able to name the solmisation syllables, the letter-names, and the intervals between each note by ear and by reading.

The physical sensations for playing Flesch's scales in double-stops, yet to be discovered by the *Colourstrings* student, are the shifting movements, which may require a change of fingers, a change of strings, or in combination.<sup>471</sup> Naming the intervals of double-stops before playing them can help connect auditory imagination with kinaesthetic imagination.<sup>472</sup> A way to do this is to put a rest after each note played so that the student can verbalise the interval for the following double-stop.

One of the challenges of playing double-stops is that the multiple stopping movement of the left-hand increases the weight down on the strings, potentially causing excessive strain.<sup>473</sup> Kempter suggested using harmonics to teach shifting in order to "unweight the hands,"<sup>474</sup> while Szilvay, EHMI:1 and A:1 each use exercises in *Colourstrings* that employ harmonics for postural remediation. The activity in *Violin ABC Book C*, where double-harmonics are used in combination with shifting, can be used as a preparatory or remedial exercise for scales in double-stops, as they

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<sup>470</sup> Flesch, *Scale System*, 2-5.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

<sup>472</sup> Barbara Conable, *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body: The Practical Application of Body Mapping and Making Music*, rev. ed. (Portland: Andover Press, 2000), 48.

<sup>473</sup> Galamian, 27.

<sup>474</sup> Kempter, 88.

encourage more horizontal movements of the left-hand on two strings with light contact.<sup>475</sup>

### **Etudes and Exercises**

The research recognised that a similar importance should be placed on studying etudes as the performance of repertoire. *Colourstrings Violin ABC Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages* connect etude repertoire with specific concepts of violin playing. This should serve as a model for teachers, when investigating etude repertoire, as should the extent to which they are able to serve the needs of the student. It further suggests that the teacher needs to have a wealth of knowledge of violin etude literature at their disposal.

Technical skills can be extended after *Colourstrings* with etude material focussing on playing in all the various positions<sup>476</sup> and double-stops, in combination with the various bow strokes. For the playing of double-stops, Jozef Bloch's *School of Double Stops*, Opus 50 was recommended by Szilvay.<sup>477</sup> The majority of bow strokes needed for violin playing are introduced in *Colourstrings Yellow Pages III*, which include many etudes and extracts from etudes. Most of the material in this volume however, is in the first position. Szilvay suggested that the student could be extended if the teacher changes the fingerings,<sup>478</sup> thus adding the possibility of playing in positions using a specific bow articulation.

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<sup>475</sup> Szilvay, *Book C*, 52.

It should be considered that using only one finger of the left-hand touching two strings simultaneously employs the double-harmonics in these exercises in Book C, whereas scales in double-stops are employed by using multiple fingers simultaneously.

<sup>476</sup> Changes of position will be featured in *Violin ABC Book G*, which is yet to be published, however there are many schools and method books that focus on this area.

<sup>477</sup> Loughnan, 40.

<sup>478</sup> Szilvay, *Handbook for Teachers and Parents* (2010), 131.

Suitable etude repertoire for *Colourstrings* students in *Violin ABC Book E, F* and *Yellow Pages* include Wohlfahrt's *Sixty Studies*, Op. 45, Dancla's *15 Studies for the Violin*, Op. 68<sup>479</sup>, and Kayser's *36 Violin Studies*, Op. 20.<sup>480</sup> It was recommended by Szilvay that students could work towards having one etude from each of these three sources each week.<sup>481</sup>

## 5.4 Other Activities

### Exercising creativity

In maintaining the values expressed by Kodály, it is important not to neglect improvisation and composition. At nearly every step of *Colourstrings* there is room for the student to compose music, the purpose of which is to have the student gain familiarity with the newly learnt concept or concepts by creating their own music. In *Colourstrings*, the student uses elements of a song or piece of music to create their own music, thus giving them certain boundaries in their creative music making.

### Transitioning to Viola and other Instruments

The holistic and thorough training through *Colourstrings* allows for relatively fluent transition to learning other instruments, especially the viola. The possibility for students to transition their study to the viola can be as early as *Violin ABC Book C* and *Book D*, because the majority of the reading training has been through relative, rather than fixed, solmisation to the treble clef. Sight singing using fixed letter-names is suggested as an activity to help students transition their reading to other clefs. One can revert to a one-line and two-line system similar to *Violin ABC Book B*, however

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<sup>479</sup> Dancla's etudes have an *ad libitum* second Violin part and so can serve as a duet activity for both student and teacher.

<sup>480</sup> Loughnan, 39-40.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

instead of the ‘DO-key’ at the beginning of tunes, a letter such as ‘F’ or ‘C,’ for example, can introduce the concept of a bass or alto clef.

## 5.5 Conclusion

*Colourstrings* relies heavily on an essential and fundamental concept that the teacher is prepared to treat every child’s learning experience equally and to seek the highest quality, making every effort to create an environment that is relaxed yet musically enriching. All of the core concepts of learning how to play the violin are presented step by step in *Colourstrings* so that any child can learn to play the traditional violin repertoire. The beginning materials are built on children’s songs and folk music, and there are examples of folk music all the way through the curriculum, even by the time the students reach traditional violin repertoire. Through using *Colourstrings*, one begins to realise that violin playing is an extension of singing, which in turn is a projection of one’s self. While this research has presented ideas about how to teach following *Colourstrings*, the students’ progress after *Colourstrings* depends on the quality and thoroughness of their education through *Colourstrings*. The first years of violin training are the most crucial for the student’s life as a violinist. It is up to the teacher and the parents to realise this as a first step towards finding the best possible ways in guiding the child’s musical education.

The most effective way to teach using *Colourstrings* is by doing the teacher-training courses, becoming familiar with the material and the *Teachers Handbook*, and doing pedagogical research: practical experience and knowledge building. This research project has allowed me not only to become familiar with *Colourstrings*, Kodály and

the East-Helsinki Music Institute, but also to learn about many other pedagogies and approaches relevant to the violin and general music education. These include several other violin methods and etude books,<sup>482</sup> the *Growth Mindset* approach and *Alexander Technique*. The multiple resources used in the development of *Colourstrings* means that teachers must learn about several other pedagogies and approaches to have a thorough understanding of *Colourstrings*.

The findings from this research have been immediately implemented in my own teaching practice. Using *Colourstrings* has opened up more questions about violin playing for me, in particular finding effective ways to teach. Mindful that *Colourstrings* does not rely on the talent of the child but rather the effectiveness of the teacher I have found using *Colourstrings* helped me identify the specific aspects of violin playing that pose the most difficulty for me. It has served as a learning experience for me. I have also uncovered a positive learning circle through *Colourstrings* for the more new ideas I find, the more I want to find. I believe therefore, that courses developed to teach violin should make use of *Colourstrings*.

Further research is needed on teacher training, the journey of becoming a *Colourstrings* teacher, and its application in Australian schools. Such a project would be not only beneficial for schools, but also for prospective teachers to learn more about their instrument and their own abilities. If we want to improve the widespread quality of violinists then we need high-quality training for teachers, and no violinist is too great to teach children; on the contrary, he or she should strive to be great enough for it.

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<sup>482</sup> For example: Sándor, Frigyes, Pál Járdányi, and Endre Szervánszky. *Violin Tutor* and Jozef Bloch's *School of Double Stops*.



## Appendix A

### Analysis of Songs and Origins in *Violin ABC Book A-D* <sup>483</sup>

Origin of Children's Songs and Folk Songs in <i>Violin ABC Book A-D</i>	Total
Finnish	30
Hungarian	79
Austrian	17
Norwegian	1
English	13
American	17
Canadian-Indian	2
French	24
German	26
Folksong – Unknown Origin	6
Russian	5
Danish	1
Polish	1
Croatian	1
Ukranian	2
Romanian	1
Swedish	3
Jamaican	1
Korean	1
Lappish	1
Peruvian	1
Bulgarian	2
United Kingdom	1
Indian	1
Switzerland	1
Melody from 16 <sup>th</sup> Century	1
Zoltán Kodály	41
Jorma Ollaranta	4
Pál Járdányi	3
Hannele Viitanen	1
Anton Diabelli	1
Maisa Krokfors	2
Carl Michael Bellman	1
Extract from JS Bach	2
Extract from LV Beethoven	2
Praetorius	1

<sup>483</sup> Géza Szilvay, *Colourstrings: Violin ABC*, 4 vols, rev. ed. (Helsinki, Fennica Gerhman, 2005).

## Appendix B

### Predetermined Questions for Interview Participants

#### Philosophy (please describe your philosophy towards teaching...)

1. *Colourstrings* is “the translation of Kodály philosophy, the Kodály way of teaching.”<sup>484</sup> ...Given that *Colourstrings* is accepted as an approach for beginners, are there philosophical elements of *Colourstrings* that can be adopted for older, more advanced violin teaching? What are they?
2. What are you trying to achieve in each of your students?
3. How do you maintain students’ enthusiasm after the playful approach of *Colourstrings*? What is significant in safeguarding student motivation and progress?

#### Methodology (how do you teach after *Colourstrings*, what activities do you do...)

4. How many times a week will you see the same pupil? What activities do they do? (For example: Individual lesson, group lesson, chamber music...) How often should they perform in concerts?
5. Please describe a typical lesson for your pupils that are advanced passed *Colourstrings*: (What do you work on? How do you start a new piece? What sort of work do you assign for them to do at home?)
6. The *Colourstrings* materials cover the foundations for the basic holds and movements of violin playing. Are these materials ever referred back to? What do you suggest to teachers in order to safeguard good postural habits for the growing student?

#### Materials (what do you use after *Colourstrings*?)

7. Given that there is a huge amount of performance repertoire for violin, are there specific pieces that you always give to students after *Colourstrings*? Do you follow an order or curriculum? Do you use a grade system?
8. What etudes and exercise material do you use for teaching violin technique after *Colourstrings*? Is there a particular order or grade system you follow?
9. The *Colourstrings* Violin Course Structure indicates that if there were another volume, (i.e. Book G), it would cover ‘*change of positions*.’ What material/s do you use to cover this area of violin playing?

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<sup>484</sup> Geza Szilvay, 2010.



10. What material/s do you use to follow the *Colourstrings* Scale books?
11. What chamber music do you recommend pupils should study after *Colourstrings*? When is a good time for them to experience playing in a full symphony orchestra?

General (General comments, recommendations, advice for teachers new to *Colourstrings*)

12. Please name any violin teachers or pedagogues whom have been an inspiration to you.
13. What advice would you give to violin teachers who are relatively new to *Colourstrings*?
14. (If Applicable) On completion of *Colourstrings* material, (or during a particular book if you prefer), what AMEB Grade level do you believe the students are at? How do you compare *Colourstrings* to the Australian standards?